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Experiences and Perceptions of Immigrant Parents:

Understanding Explanations for Children's Participation in Out-of-School Activities

by

Wenbei Zhu

A THESIS

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Abstract

Guided by an ecological framework, this study has made an attempt to gain a thorough understanding of how Chinese immigrant parents think of and arrange their children's out-of-school time (OST) activities in the context of their perceptive and experiential world before and after immigration. Based on the rich and thoughtful data I sought through interviews with my 12 respondents, this study revealed an interactive dynamic of operations at different levels. Namely, my findings have suggested from in-depth to surface at least three interrelated levels of operations: the process of multiple stages that these parents have gone through resulted in the movements and shifts in their mind and life; the exemplified influence on childrearing from in-depth level on OST associated understanding, choice of patterns, and multi-functions of OST activities; and subsequently, the required premises and conditions for OST participation on the surface level. An obvious gap was detected between parents' understanding of competencies in the Canadian context and their actual choice of out-of-school time activities for children. Eventually, all the effort these immigrant parents made direct to the ultimate goal of creating an enjoyable, fulfilled, and "normal life" for their children and preparing them for their future in the adult world, which is essentially a part of their adaptation task in the Canadian context. I suggest that how parents make what decisions with regard to their children's OST participation cannot be understood in an isolated way without looking at the sources of constant influences coming from broader and deeper ecological systems.

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PROEM

This qualitative study looks into the perceptive and experiential worlds of immigrant parents with a purpose of capturing what works behind parents' decisions in relation to children's out-of-school time (OST) activities. To begin, I feel proper to share some of my thoughts and observations that I wrote prior to this research which may give an idea of my motive of doing this study.

As an immigrant, a mother of two young children (one is 5 years old, and another will be 2 years old) and a PhD student striving to balance all of my roles in life, I often feel that raising children in Canada is like probing in the darkness. This may be so for many other immigrant parents like me, regardless of culture, ethnicity, education level, or religion. It is not that we know nothing about how to deal with parents' duties; it is that parents often get influenced, and confused, by using the ways their parents raised them. For example, it is suggested that as immigrant youths increase in age, there is increased parent-adolescent conflict due to contrasting ideas about youth authority and autonomy (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Especially because I am doing educational research, I am acutely aware of the importance of the early years of childhood for healthy physical and social development. So the thought that I must be well prepared for the potential conflicts that may hinder my children's growth have haunted me from time to time.

It has become a natural part of my family life routine to speak to and teach my children our native language out of the consideration that they should know their mother language (of course, even this is somewhat questionable, because they are Canadian!) and carry on their parents' cultural heritage. But often I find it very exhausting to carry out this task. Explaining

things that are very Chinese culture-bound in the Canadian context, to children soaking in Canadian culture is so demanding, and sometimes it even sounds funny. As I view it, this may also reflect the communicative obstacles that may occur for many immigrant children. I notice that my children have already learned to make use of this "quasi-Chinese identity." I feel they are not "authentic" Chinese, which is true. These moments have occurred when they were embarrassed or felt uncomfortable in particular situations. For example, sometimes they would say they are Chinese because they realize that they do not speak English as fluently as the children of English-speaking parents do. The point here is that I understand first-hand that they will confront identity issues related to their parents' cultural background sooner or later.

Many immigrant parents like me may feel they are the light to guide their children through all this darkness, and they also may realize that a child's early experiences are critically important for healthy development. However, they may feel lost themselves at times as to where to fit in and what to do, not to mention interacting in a new language that can be especially stressful for new Asian immigrants. It is often true that immigrant parents are unable to provide the level of support their children need to adjust to the new culture; parents are limited by their own unfamiliarity with the host culture, and often, the local language. The anxiety in immigrant parents can be extremely exacerbated by the exhausting multitasking imposed on a daily basis by living with competing cultures.

As my children are nearing school age, I have become very anxious, as I worry not only about their academics but also the social part of their schooling. Some current issues such as juvenile crime, early pregnancy, bullying, drug use, and discrimination seem increasingly prevalent. The closer the day that my children will start their formal school education, the more consideration I give to the means and resources that I should use to help my children, as well as

the many other immigrant children, transition well into school and sail through numerous cultural reefs in the coming years.

Starting from this personal need and taking into consideration the many concerns I mentioned above, I began to attend to the older children in the community. I have developed a concern for children left unsupervised after school, although they may have reached the legal age to stay home alone. Parents may feel safe to keep their kids within the community after school, but it seems to me that this seemingly safe isolation doesn't help with the concerns and issues I have already mentioned. As well, those children left unattended may feel bored without a lot of fun activities to take part in. Their developmental needs must be met, and more is required of parents. Yet it is very likely that these same parents probably cannot afford much time and energy to do more for their children.

Despite all the practical reasons, young children need more connections and interactions with the outside world, with peers and adults in the mainstream culture, and to build necessary relations and even social capital; after all, they have a Canadian life to make. Besides, if there do exist the communicative issues resulted from the cultural differences, the best way to deal with the issue then is to communicate. Children need a safe and accommodating environment in which they can grow and develop just like all other children regardless of their skin colour or ethnicity. They need to learn and be taught in terms of their language, culture, and family. They also need to have ties with other caring adults. Isolation from potential danger is never the best strategy to be safe.

Having concerns like these, I am quite certain that I want to create a safe and rich environment for the growth of my children. Such feelings have therefore triggered my initial interest to probe into literature concerning effective strategies. It reveals to me that among

various types of support, OST (out of school and after school) activities bring benefits that can mediate the negative effects of immigration on children. A frequently articulated goal of OST programs in general is helping youth, and often their parents, to transition into their new communities.

I, the researcher—a first-generation Chinese immigrant who is now permanently residing in Canada—became interested in the research topic through my own experiences as an immigrant and as a parent. To great extent, I shared an ecological niche (Falicov, 1995) with all of the participants in this study: I was born and raised in China; I received an education up to university in China; I experienced moving from a monocultural society to a multicultural society; I am a first-time parent with pre-school children; and often, I felt caught up in the cultural clashes between the East and the West. These experiences in many ways helped in sharpening my awareness of educating my children in a way that differs from the way I was raised. This research has thus become very meaningful and relevant for me as I can personally relate to anxieties and cultural dilemmas that some Chinese and other immigrant parents are experiencing. By reflecting from the perspective of a Chinese immigrant and mother with minority status myself, this study also helped me to deepen my understanding of where cultural barriers are, and how to overcome them, therefore effectively helping my children as well as immigrant children in general.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is safe to say that most immigrant parents are very concerned about their children's education and future life path, which are among the primary reasons for immigration. Lots of parents and family members are involved to a significant extent in the lives of their children (Lopez, 2001). One of the outstanding supporting facts is that many immigrant parents come to realize the importance of children's out of school time (or in some literature, after school time) in children's educational development, given that children in North American schools have much more free time of their own compared to children in schools in China and many other Asian countries. Out of school time (OST) hours, including hours immediately after a school day, weekends, holidays, professional development days, and seasonal breaks have shown to be a breeding period of many negative traits and behaviors in youth; for example, it is observed that if children hang out on the streets unsupervised after school, they are more likely to get involved in risky behaviors, engage in promiscuous sexual acts, use marijuana, consume alcohol, smoke cigarettes, have more depressive moods, lower grades, and experience more episodes of violence, compared with a child supervised after-school in a nurturing, supportive environment (Richardson, Radziszewska, Dent, & Flay, 1993).

The importance of out of school time has long been recognized, but the results of participating different types of programs may vary (Vandell et al., 2005). Although numerous researchers have shown benefits associated with participation in quality structured and especially long-term out of school programs (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005; Simpkins, Little, & Weiss, 2004), other scholars also suggest that it may not be realistic to think that all programs can achieve every positive youth

development outcome (e.g., Yohalem, Pittman, & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004). Besides providing a safe and supervised environment for children, out of school hours are found to allow learning skills and positive relationship to grow. For example, findings from prior studies clearly suggest that disparities in learning rates grow faster during the summer break than during the school year (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Downey & Pribesh, 2004). The productive use of out of school time is becoming critical in improving children's school performance and in helping them build essential characteristics in children and skills that can benefit them further in their future lives and careers.

As a matter of fact, how to optimize this out of school time has always been a main concern and a challenge to many immigrant parents. In the research world, surveys have most often been used to explore parents' needs and the level of parents' satisfaction with out of school programs in general, and the degree of influence of the family's demographic characteristics on participation is also given attention (e.g., Wimer et al., 2006). Yet information gained from this kind of research has been insufficient to grasp a holistic picture for the purpose of understanding and programming. When attempting to determine what factors or influences work behind parents' decisions regarding their children's out of school time, many questions still remain; for example, do the contextual changes in immigration experiences alter some of the parents' perceptions toward the usefulness of certain OST programs in the educational development of their children?

To find the answers, I ventured through a small-scale qualitative exploratory study into the perceptive and experiential world of immigrant parents that can lead to understanding their decisions regarding children's participation in OST programs. The conduct of this study has lasted a time span of two years, with me, the researcher witnessing the growth of children from

preschool age to elementary school age and the influence of out of school programs in their life. In order to make sense of the emerging concerns and meanings in relation to various social systems, including family, children, school, community, and outside institutions, I followed the ecologic system perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecology theory is a way of looking at the interactions of humans with their environments and considering this relationship as a system. It provides a way of making sense of events that have happened in the past, and that allows predictions about what may happen in the future. Essential models in this perspective have provided the choice of theoretical framework of this study. This is further explained in Chapter 3.

Using the philosophy embedded in the ecological theoretical perspective to guide the methodology of this study, I approached the study by looking at four major paradigms: immigrant parents' values and beliefs regarding childrearing; the connections between immigrant parents' past experiences and perceptions with out of school time and their decisions in Canada; the influence of immigration experience in their choices; and influences from the past and current community as well as educational contexts in the shaping of their decisions. Presumably, these four paradigms weave together a contextual web and they come into play at certain points in time when immigrant parents make decisions.

The research methods for carrying out this study included an extensive literature review, and key informant in-depth interviews with families that had at least one preschool aged child at the beginning of the study. A total of 12 Chinese families were involved. With each family, I conducted two one-and-a half-hour interviews. Interview questions were developed on the basis of the four paradigms mentioned above. More details with regard to research methods are given in Chapter 4. Through observation and analysis from the viewpoint of immigrant parents, the

researcher sought through the study to achieve a greater understanding of immigrant families' short-term as well as long-term plans for their children. Findings of this study wwould be valuable for scholars in the field of family studies, and for schools as well as organizations that focus on or are charged with the delivery of OST programs.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to promote a greater understanding of what influences drive immigrant parents' decisions toward their children's out of school activities. This purpose was three-fold. First, this study was designed to facilitate parents to share their experiences with and perceptions of OST activities and, in the process, bring to the forefront their often taken-for-granted voices, concerns, experiential and situated knowledge. Second, this study aimed to raise parents' awareness about the benefits and problems associated with different kinds of OST programs. Therefore they could genuinely consider strategic use of quality OST resources for the overall development and adaptation of their children. Finally, if active parents' involvement is to be expected, I hoped, through this study to provide insights into cultural influences to those people and organizations who work with immigrant families in the field of OST in terms of their recruitment and retention strategies.

Research questions

The central research question of this study was, "What can be learned from immigrant parents' experiences and perceptions that influence their decisions on children's participation in OST activities?" Centered around this question and developed in accordance with the four paradigms prescribed by the ecological comparative model, four sub-research questions were addressed:

1. How did immigration to Canada impact these immigrant parents' lives and alter their perceptions and decisions with regard to childrearing?

2. How do immigrant parents perceive the role of education and OST participation in their childrearing practice before and after immigration in both their original culture and in Canadian context?
3. In what ways do the differences in immigrant parents' experiences with OST in different cultures matter to them?
4. How can the possible gap be understood between immigrant parents' understanding of competencies necessary for success in Canadian context and their strategic use of OST activities in childrearing from their respective cultural perspective?

Around each major research question, a sub-group of questions were also developed, which are explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

Significance of this study

It is a salient feature of this era that in year 2011 the population of immigrant families in the country has grown to one fifth of the total population already (Statistics Canada, 2014, Jan 14). Educating children from immigrant backgrounds effectively is inevitably an important strategic task for the benefit of the nation's future. For decades, public schools have been commonly perceived to be facing so many challenges that people are looking to implement any program that might help to bring about improvements (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004); how parents structure their children's out of school time has therefore become critically important.

In addition, the time span chosen for this study is significant because children at this age period have more unstructured after-school time since they do not have nearly the same amount of homework as those in higher grades (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). Understandably, from

preschool age to beginning elementary school age, children's level of participation in out of school activities very likely reflects parents' own resources and capital (Raleigh, 2008).

The significance of this study also is borne out in its methodology. To be more specific, the study adds to the dimensions of studying immigrant parents' needs and concerns by giving credit to parents' past experiences and root beliefs behind decision making around their children's participation in out of school activities. With cultural, historical, as well as personal elements well embedded in an ecological perspective, this study has given specific recognition of the importance to family involvement for all of the benefits of the OST programs to be achieved. Such a perspective is hoped to bridge contextually the divide between home, school, and the broader societal context, and provide practical bases for long lasting support to immigrant children and youth—not just in theory—and these benefits may extend beyond the child to the family and eventually to the larger community.

Limitations

It is necessary also to realize that this study and aspects of the methodology itself have limitations. Frankly, it is fair to say that any limitations inherent in qualitative research may also apply to this study; for example, there are elements that are inevitably emotionally biased, perceptually limited, subjective, and ungeneralizable (Martin, 1985). In order to reduce these limitations, I have intentionally documented and accounted for my perceptions and experiences, and have presented them in the beginning of this thesis (See Proem). Throughout the study, I was attentive to how my own experiences and perceptions necessarily affected the gathering and interpreting of data. However, my "insider" status as someone who has undergone the same kinds of family experiences and decisions will add to the richness and deeper analysis of the data in this study.

Next, due to the specific focus of this study, only Chinese immigrant families were involved. This allowed a comparatively thorough understanding of one ethnic group without resorting to cultural stereotyping. Further, as a Chinese immigrant and minority mother myself, I am able to relate to many of the anxieties and cultural dilemmas that the other Chinese immigrant parents were experiencing. Inevitably, it is likely that the data collection and analysis are affected and enriched by the researcher's sense of values and personal experiences. No suggestion is made that the findings discussed below will be directly applicable to other ethnic groups, since perceptions, experiences and interpretations all vary. However, the insights and rich data presented will likely resonate with and reflect the experiences of a wide range of immigrant families, and the broader issues of parental choices around their children's educational and social well-being.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I outline the literature from macro- down to micro- levels on topics arranged around the four parameters: the social-cultural background, childrearing beliefs and patterns, immigration and its impact, and a review of OST related topics. The rational for such a literature review derived from the fact that all Chinese immigrant parents who participated in this study were brought up and received their school education in China and are now residing in Canada and raising their children in a North American context. As a result, it is reasonable to relate parents' way of thinking with the cultural borderland contexts (Rosaldo, 1989) where there is overlap as well as differences within and between cultures, including particular social-cultural, historical, community, and family circumstances. An attempt is made here to review literature that might have cast some influence on the past and present experience of parents in this study, in the hope that these insights can help construct the necessary contextual background for the purposes of understanding the inner connections between systems and build a scholarly base for further interpretations of immigrant Chinese parents' OST decisions and arrangements.

An overview of Chinese social-cultural context and its influence

In an attempt to look into the origins of immigrant Chinese parents' beliefs and practices related to OST arrangements for children, the following review focuses mainly on three topics: a general picture of Chinese socio-cultural context, which provides a backdrop of happenings in Chinese life; influence of traditional ideas on cultural perception digs for in-depth understanding of Chinese traditional ideology, Confucian tradition in particular, and its fundamental influence in people's perceptions; and voices from other researchers regarding the influence of traditional

Chinese ideas, which brings to light other important perspectives on the influence of traditional Chinese ideas.

A general picture of Chinese socio-cultural context

The complexities of Chinese social-cultural context evolve around China's long history, a history full of rough and tumble political fluctuations and life's unexpectedness. As it is impossible to provide a comprehensive review here, and in order to move on to more relevant concerns, I can only try to provide an admittedly brief review of a very complex and nuanced holistic picture.

Similar to many peoples in this world, Chinese people have experienced darkness (e.g., the cruelty of tyrannies in many dynasties), poverty (e.g., as a result of social inequality between people living in both urban and rural areas), death threats (e.g., famine because of a radical Great Leap Forward; and many political prosecutions especially aiming at intellectuals), violence (e.g., numerous wars in history; political movement, particularly the Proletarian Cultural Revolution), and ignorance (e.g., the bigotry of retaining the detrimental one-child policy in the changing national and global situation). Although modern Chinese people have benefited from the country's open-door policy to the world since 1978, new challenges arise, for example, a feeling of getting lost in the clashes of different ideologies. New symptoms such as extreme materialism and utilitarianism have been eroding the whole society. Moral issues override economic issues and cause worrisome feelings in Chinese people.

During all of this time, Chinese people still adhere to the importance of education and the belief that educational achievement can change a person's life, which is probably considered a neural and less risky road to take than engaging in activities such as politics. This has historical reasons. In ancient China, introduced as a means to curtail the power of the elite by avoiding conflict between the different classes, the world's first examination system started two thousand

years ago in Han dynasty (206BC to 220BC), which provided commoners access to the power of the ruling classes. With that history in mind, there persists in the general Chinese population the belief that education would eventually lead to upward social mobility which is seen by many to be a key motivator in the pursuit of learning (Cheng, 1994).

However, what happens in the field of education in contemporary China seems hard to comprehend and somewhat frustrating. As one example, since 1976 after 10 years of breakdown due to the cultural revolutionary movement, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination in China—as *gaokao* is formally called—is taken each year by millions of stressed-out Chinese teenagers battling for admission to one of the nation's universities. According to a post on the website of Vocativ, a popular on-line media, "It makes the American SAT look like a colouring exercise" (Shi, 2013, June 13). As an explanation on this fervent Chinese characteristic phenomenon, Katz and his colleagues (Katz, Juni, & Shope, 1993) have written that "in China, attendance at a university is a very desirable position for a young person and represents an avenue for vocational and social mobility" (p. 771).

With roots in imperial meritocracy, it is believed the *gaokao*, as a must-take-path for all students in China, will in large part determine where a student ends up in life. As a logical result, parents have to push especially hard for success. But things are not that simple, and many other factors confound the picture: the enlarging gap between the rich and the poor deepens the inequality in the distribution of educational resources; the market economy has made education a money machine that can kill the dreams to change life through education; students residing in the big cities are given privileges; and education in lower ranked universities can eventually fail individuals in terms of employment and many other choices in life, just to name a few.

The intensity of obtaining a proper education is even intensified by the one child policy starting in 1979 which continues to take effect in controlling the population. In the past two decades, Chinese urban parents' preoccupation with the education of the only child has been phenomenal.

It should be also noted that since 1999, the Chinese government has enacted an essential educational reform—ideally, to shift from centuries' long traditional examination-oriented educational system to a quality-oriented educational system. As a change, the emphasis of the education would be placed on raising the quality and innovative capability of Chinese students. The function of education was to shift from knowledge dissemination to raising the comprehensive quality of those who receive education. While an education aimed at enabling children to develop in an all-round way—physically, intellectually, morally and aesthetically is indeed very inspiring, the practical undertakings involved some good but only surface changes. The change in the core of examination-oriented educational system has yet to come. The result that followed is in addition to the large amount of academic work for children to do already, whereby Chinese parents and children also need to invest significant amounts of money and time in activities outside of regular school hours to meet the needs set by the requirement for a well-rounded childhood development. These needs sometimes turn out to be more important aspects that school authorities will consider when children need to move on to the next stage of their education.

A saying popular among people in the Chinese community is "don't fail your children at the starting line," although to many parents they even are not sure what their children should be competing for at the starting line and what in children should not be failed at the starting line. There are many cases (e.g., in media or online stories or overheard from other parents) that

Chinese parents save every penny from their already tight family finance in order to invest in their children's all-round education. Yet how early this starting line should be established has posed another question, without a standard answer. It appears that as early as in utero, parents make their children listen to music and stories. From an early age (as early as can be imagined), children will one after another begin to practice singing, dancing, calligraphy, art (e.g., learning violin or guitar), advanced math (e.g., Olympic mathematics), and other languages (usually English), just to name a few (Ji, Jiao, & Jing, 1993). The pursuit of talent education goes in a frenzy of excitement in China. Not to mention such a pursuit could already pose an insurmountable challenge for families in the poorer regions where even compulsory school education cannot be guaranteed. Questions of inequality again will arise.

Further, this "starting line" theory is also intensely felt even by overseas Chinese as many immigrant parents constantly consult people back in their country of origin for childrearing advice. Some feel scared to be informed that their children will be left behind when comparing with children of their relatives and friends.

A comparative review of influence of traditional ideas on cultural perception

However, aside from the intensity felt around education in China, according to Jin and Cortazzi (1998), all education in mainland China is still bearing characteristics of Confucian principles even though the teachers and students are often unaware of their sources. The return of traditional ideas, especially Confucian ideology after having abandoned it for decades (Confucianism was attacked and demonized after virtually having dominated a feudal society for over 2000 years) should be taken as an important sign of the whole society's mentality—Chinese need a sort of spiritual guide, to legitimate what people aspire to achieve and to pass to the next generation the essential values that help build pride in one's national identity.

Also, recent studies show that Chinese parents retain many traditional aspects of parenting values and practices even when living in a place not of their origin (Chen, 2001; Huntsinger et al., 2000; Lin & Fu, 1990; Zhang, Kohnstamm, Slotboom, Elphick, & Cheung, 2002). Ho (1989) also observed that, despite undeniable changes and departures from traditional norms, even among acculturated Chinese-Americans, features of a traditional pattern are still highly discernible.

In Chinese traditional ideology, Confucian schools of thought guide and shape how people in Asian especially Chinese culture approach skill development and academic achievement and the value they place on effort and persistence (Hau & Salili, 1991; Rao, Noely, & Sachs, 2000; Shimahara, 1986). Prominent ideas borne in this tradition guiding people in their daily lives include, but are not limited to, effortful and pragmatic learning, learning and filial piety, and moral cultivation of self, each of which I elaborate on in the next section.

Effortful and pragmatic learning

In terms of learning, it is believed Confucius values effortful learning, behavioral reform, pragmatic learning, acquisition of essential knowledge, and respectful learning (Tweed & Lehman, 2002).

Confucius has expressed the idea that with effort, anyone can learn, regardless of their ability. He looks down on those who pursue quick results and who want to avoid extended effort. He believes that practice and single-minded effort are instrumental to attaining success (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). Such effortful learning has been well documented.

Researchers show that to many Chinese students, teachers, and parents, intelligence itself is not something innate and relatively fixed but rather something that can be improved by hard work (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Hau and Salili (1991), Biggs (1996), and Salili (1996) have

reported in their findings that Chinese students were much more likely to attribute academic success primarily to effort rather than to both effort and ability, like Western students. As also can be found in Lee's (1996) conclusion, there was extraordinary emphasis on effort, will power, or concentration of the mind in the Confucian tradition. Likewise, because there is a strong belief in attainability by all, there is also a strong belief that one's failure is not due to one's internal make-up or ability, but one's effort and will power.

A study conducted by Li (2003) made an attempt to find out if learning means the same thing to Westerners and Asians. He examined U.S. and Chinese conceptions of learning with list of learning-related terms generated by U.S. and Chinese college students. The two sets of beliefs developed by the students contained such different notions about learning that there was little overlap. Most striking of all is the near absence of references to hard work, effort, and persistence on the U.S. list, whereas such concepts were abundant on the Chinese list (according to Li, 30 percent versus 2 percent, respectively). The results also show that Chinese terms also indicate strong desire and passion compared with relative lack of such affect in the English terms. Finally, the Chinese concepts convey a clearer call for action, exhibiting perhaps a stronger tendency of the so-called directive force (D'Andrade, 1987), but this tendency was less visible (perhaps implicit) on the U.S. list.

Some cross-cultural comparative studies also support the effortful leaning conception in Asian, particularly Chinese students (e.g., Rosenthal & Feldman, 1991; Sue & Zane, 1985). Heine et al. (2001) reported a strong belief of success based on effort in Asian American and Japanese post-secondary students as opposed to Western postsecondary students' tendency to attribute academic success to less controllable factors such as possessing inherent ability or having good teachers (Stevenson, Chen, & Lee, 1993; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992).

The idea of effortful learning also helps explain some of the approaches Chinese people use toward skill development, for example, repetition as well as memorization in order to achieve deep understanding. Watkins (2000) proposed that many of the teachers and better students in Hong Kong and some other areas of China did not see memorizing and understanding as separate but rather interlocking processes (Kember, 1996; Marton et al., 1997; Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Further, they believed that understanding could be developed through memorizing. The second observation is that Chinese educators tended to see both creativity and understanding as slow processes requiring much effort, repetition, and attention rather than relatively rapid, insightful processes. Watkins's (2000) study examined the issue of the cross-cultural validity of Western principles of student learning and how Chinese students and teachers from Hong Kong universities think and go about learning and teaching. He came to make the comment that, "if, however, like the Chinese students you believe that understanding is a slow process requiring much hard work then effort attribution for academic success seems logical" (Watkins, 2000, p. 166).

But learning in Confucianism has a pragmatic orientation that implies that learning is not just for learning's sake but a means to achieve the final goal—in addition to personal reform (e.g., to be more virtuous and more skilled), is to competently conduct oneself within a civil service job (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). This orientation is well expressed when Confucius asked,

> If a man who knows the three hundred Odes by heart fails when given administrative responsibilities and proves incapable of exercising his own initiative when sent to foreign states, then what use are the Odes to him, however many he may have learned?
>
> (as cited in Tweed & Lehman, 2002)

Such a pragmatic orientation finds parallels in parents' expectations and career aspirations. Jun Li (2001) explored the expectations of recent immigrant Chinese parents for their children. He noted that "the parents unanimously emphasized that their children must obtain a quality university education" (p. 481). This observation is completely in line with the Confucian thought that nothing is more important than receiving formal education (*wei you du shu gao*). One of the essential reasons for such a high importance attached to education is that academic achievement often leads to higher social status (*xue er you ze shi*). To put it simply, this Confucian motto means that only if you excel in your studies will you have a good future. Li (2003) also contended that Chinese people regard knowledge and learning as something indispensable to their personal lives.

This is also supported by Katz et al.'s (1993) study, in which they made such a comment that "attendance at a university is a very desirable position for a young person and represents an avenue for vocational and social mobility" (p. 771). In a sense, attaining a good education parallels a privileged status in the social realm. Zhou, Kwok and Bond (2009) also confirmed the link between reward for application (effort) and academic achievement.

Therefore, the high expectations for child achievement held by both Asian parents and students help explain the phenomenon that Asian students are found to spend significantly more time studying outside of school than do their American peers (Chen & Stevenson, 1995). Chen and Stevenson (1995) concluded that it is the beliefs and attitudes of Asian students and their parents that result in high academic motivation and achievement.

Jose and Bellamy (2012) as well as Tweed and Lehman (2002) found similarities between Confucian belief in effort-based success and the incremental theory of intelligence (as opposed to entity theory of intelligence), a model developed by Dweck (1995, 1998, 1999,

2006). Incremental theorists assume that one can change important aspects of the self, such as one's ability to perform intellectual tasks. As a logical alignment there comes the conclusion that achievement is determined more by effort and strategy than by inherent ability. Tweed and Lehman (2002) thus confirmed that this belief in the malleability of fundamental abilities coheres with Confucius's doctrine that humans are by nature similar and that success is within the reach of all who work to learn certain fundamentals.

While academic achievement is also highly valued within Western cultures (Dweck, 2006; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998), Dweck has noted that within American samples in his study, some adults and children attributed academic success at least partly to innate ability (e.g., genetics) and the role of effort in success was not considered as strong as that in Chinese culture. Theorists holding on to entity theory of intelligence, in Dweck's (1999, 2006) study, perceived the self as unchangeable and attributed performance largely to inherent ability rather than effort and strategy. They believed that poor performance reflects unchangeably low ability (Levy & Dweck, 1998)—a form of characterological self-blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), which can predict increased anxiety, reduced task pleasure, reduced perseverance, and reduced performance (Levy & Dweck, 1998).

It is also worthy of mention the study conducted by Jose and Bellamy (2012) on relationships of parents' theory of intelligence with children's persistence and learned helplessness. They conjectured that the entity theory of intelligence might be more relevant and learned helplessness more prevalent within Western culture, whereas the incremental theory might be more important in explaining the achievement motivation of Asian children. Their findings seem to show that the simple Asian-effort versus Western-ability prediction is not supported. As in their study, parents from the two Western-countries (U.S. and New Zealand)

were reported to have demonstrated the highest support for the incremental theory (a total of four countries were involved in the study; the other two are China and Japan).

The relationship between motivation and filial piety

Atkinson (1964) observed that in Western societies, achievement motivation is treated as a highly individualistic, ego-enhancing concept and is characterized by individual competition where the need for success tries to overcome the fear of failure where winning is its own reward. But in East Asian societies the notion of success needs to be reinterpreted in a collectivist framework which may involve significant others, the family, peers, or even society as a whole (Holloway, 1988; Salili, 1996).

When it comes to intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, Watkins and Biggs (1996) argued that for Chinese students the adoption of deep strategies "may be activated by a head of mixed motivational steam: personal ambition, family face, peer support, material reward, and, yes, possibly even interest" (p. 273), whereas for Western students intrinsic motivation is "a precursor of the desired deep learning strategies" (p. 273). Based on the research on learning concepts in Chinese traditions, Hess and Azuma (1991) stated that "internal dispositions create a sense of diligence and receptiveness" (p. 7). Such dispositions help make academic tasks meaningful and worthwhile at a much more basic level than the Western notion of intrinsic motivation. The pressure to succeed academically is there for all children irrespective of the parent's educational level and is very much a matter of "family face" (Ho, 1993). According to Tseng (2004), Asian American students evidence higher academic motivation which is due in part to an increased feeling of family obligation.

To bring honour to the family is considered a virtue within the sphere of filial piety (Chinese: *Xiaoxin*). It has been acknowledged that to talk about human development in Chinese

culture, one can never overlook the role of family (Lin & Fu, 1990; Shek & Chan, 1999). In traditional Chinese families, family interaction and structure are largely shaped by the teachings of Confucius, which emphasize filial piety and hierarchical relationships (Chan & Leong, 1994). In Confucian philosophy, filial piety (Chinese: 孝, *xiào*) is a virtue of respect for one's parents and ancestors (Wikipedia, 2013, May 27). Filial piety is interpreted as reverence for parents is considered in Chinese ethics the prime virtue and the basis of all right human relations ("filial piety," n.d.). Filial piety relates to a series of behavioural and moral standards, such as showing obedience to parents, taking care of elderly parents, performing one's job well so as to gain material support for the parents, and bringing honours to the family and ancestors.

The fostering of filial piety has practical purposes, for example, the conformity from children and family solidarity. Above all things, children are not expected to do anything that brings shame and dishonour to the family (e.g., aggression, antisocial behavior, and disobedience). In contrast, those behaviors that bring honour to the family include achievement, obedience, and obligation to the parents (L. H. Chiu, 1987; Ho, 1989; Kelley & Tseng, 1992).

Such a traditional idea has been evidenced in research (e.g., Power, Ritter, Bourg, Kelley, & Porfolio, 1987) on Chinese parenting beliefs, which appear that encouraging compliance to and respect for authority is an important part of the early socialization process. In Power et al.'s (1987) study of Chinese mothers' beliefs regarding child-rearing, Chinese mothers believed that their parental demands were valid and for the child's own good. The implication is that children should therefore follow parents' instructions. Likely, such belief is held by immigrant Chinese mothers as well. Sidel (1972, as cited in Domino & Hannah, 1987) maintained that Chinese child-rearing methods emphasize expectations of good behavior, cooperation, obedience and discipline.

Conversely, the authority figures such as Chinese parents and teachers thus have to carry on a greater responsibility in raising and educating their children, as expressed in popular Chinese saying that "*yang bu jiao, fu zhi guo, jiao buy an, shi zhi duo*" (Chinese: 子不教，父之过; 教不严，师之惰). The literal meaning of this saying is that to feed but not teach, it is the parents to be blamed; to teach without strictness, it is the teacher to be blamed. My interpretation of this saying is: beside meeting children's basic needs by providing them food, clothing and shelter, parents should pay more attention to shape their children in their academic pursuit as well as character building; to fulfill their responsibility, teachers should look after their studentssuch as they would their own children and teach with passion and discipline for the good of their students. Similar to what a parent expressed in Li's (2002) study, "If we parent him like Western people, let him develop naturally, we won't get ideal results" (p. 485). Misunderstanding or insufficient understanding of natural development on one hand, the comment can nevertheless reflect Chinese parents' understanding of their responsibility in teaching children, which is in line with the Chinese saying I have quoted.

Yet it should also be noted that in different cultural settings, the traditional idea of filial piety may be endorsed somewhat differently (Liu, Ng, Weatherall, & Loong, 2000). Liu et al. (2000) suggested that it is possible that different psychological processes are involved in maintaining support of filial piety across the generations. Those who are Western-identified, for example, perceive filial piety more as facilitating regular positive communication between generations, whereas those who are Chinese-identified relate filial piety more in terms of material obligations, such as providing financial help (Lim & Lim, 2003). And the close family ties, the mutual dependence and conformity of traditional Chinese culture are on the same page with group solidarity and acceptance of authority (Lim & Lim, 2003).

Respect authorities and collectivistic orientation

The hierarchical relationship emphasized in filial piety can be extended to relationship between teachers to students as well as the country to her people. In line with respectful learning, Confucius expects learners to respect and obey authority figures (such as teachers, parents, officials) because "to honour those higher than ourselves is the highest expression of the sense of justice" (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). Interestingly, Tweed and Lehman (2002) pointed out that such a tenet seems to contrast with Socrates' habit of publicly humiliating authority figures, while the purpose of which lies in the pursuit of true knowledge through doubt. Watkins and Biggs (1996) also confirmed that there is a general tendency for Chinese students to hold a respectful attitude toward authority such as teachers, as opposed to the inquiry-oriented activities that underlie Western conceptions of learning. Concerning this observation, Jones (2000), in his article *Teaching/learning through Confucius,* contended that,

> society in Western thought is seen as an abstraction of atomic individuals, each of who bears certain inalienable right. The Chinese, on the other hand, traditionally have viewed society as being the source for the circumscribing characteristics of the individual. Consequently, society becomes a repository of values and is not seen as an arena for actualizing human potential as it is regarded in the West. For the Chinese, individuals become concrete exemplars of value and ought to be emulated as representation of reasonableness. (n.p.)

Domino and Hannah (1987) conducted a study using the method of story completions to analyze the social values of Chinese and American children. They found that the story completions given by Chinese children clearly reflect a greater social orientation. Concerning group or collectivistic orientation, Wilson (1980) pointed out that in Chinese society the group is

the ultimate standard for approval or rejection of behavior. In the story completion analysis, Domino and Hannah noted that while none of the American children mentioned public shame, 21 percent of Chinese children did. This finding supports the observation that group unity is to be highly sought after in Chinese culture, while deviant behavior violates group goals and causes shame for all. Other researchers (e.g., Bond & Wang, 1983) also agreed quite persuasively that the Chinese socialize their children to exhibit emotional restraint, as promoter of group harmony.

Learning aim and moral cultivation of self

Learning aims to cultivate inner character, or moral aspect of personal development. To fulfill the aim of developing proper character, self-cultivation is believed to be the best approach (Shek & Chan, 1999). Li's (2003) study of conceptions of learning shows that even though the Chinese also endorse utilitarian benefits as part of their motivation for learning, their purposes do not end there. Individuals also seek learning to cultivate themselves as a whole in the moral domain toward self-perfection. Li (2003) contended that the need of knowledge and the seeking of it require that Chinese cultivate the desire to learn, engage in lifelong learning, remain humble, and adopt the action plan of diligence, endurance of hardship, perseverance, and concentration. In contrast to the mind-orientation of knowledge/learning reflected in U.S. conceptions of learning, Chinese beliefs about learning seem to display a person-orientation.

The ultimate aim of child education and child rearing in Confucianism is geared toward purposeful living. And the highest purpose of living is about self-perfection (Lin & Wang, 2004), which is mainly spiritual, denoting a cultivation of inner character including self-restraint, self-reflection, maintenance of harmonious relationships with people, as well as pursuit of knowledge to one's best ability. Guo (2006) observed that self-restraint, obedience and compliance are thus desirable characteristics that are the precursors of any harmonious relationships, such as the one

within a family. Huntsinger et al. (2000) added to this life attitude by also emphasizing values related to serving others through benevolence, sharing and caring, and what children achieve for their family. As a matter of fact, the word 'family' in Confucian thought generally revolves around two notions, the collectivist tradition and the ethic filial piety. The former stresses the need of being interdependent in groups, the latter highlights the importance of obeying and honouring parents (Ho, 1994).

According to Jones (2000), the focus, especially in Confucius' thought and the subsequent Confucian tradition, is on the human being and his or her relation to what is often referred to as "the other" in current Western discourse. The overwhelming concern of Confucius is the relation of the human being to other human beings through self-cultivation.

Li (2003), in his study of comparing U.S. and Chinese beliefs in relation to learning, observed that Chinese beliefs address the fundamental questions of what knowledge means to one as a socio-cultural being. This kind of learning aims at breadth and depth of knowledge, the unity of knowing and morality, and contribution to society in addition to mastery of academic subjects and utilitarian purposes (Lee, 1996; Li, 2002; Tu, 1979).

Voices from other researchers regarding the influence of traditional Chinese ideas

Researchers also call for balanced perspectives and approaches when examining the influence of traditional Chinese cultural ideas, which actually elicit controversies among Chinese thinkers themselves. Lau and Yeung (1996) pointed out that one shortcoming of research on the impact of Confucianism on Chinese culture and on Chinese rearing practice is the emphasis on positive effects, especially the academic success of the Chinese. Steinberg et al. (1992) gave a look at the other side of high parental expectations of Asian Americans by reporting that Asian American children might be motivated more by the fear of negative consequences than by their belief that

educational success pays off. Suzuki (1980) and Ekblad (1986) suggested that Chinese worldview and orientation toward children is more pragmatic and moralistic than psychological, which is reflected in the fact that the academic excellence may be obtained at the expense of quality in the parent-child relationship as well as such positive developmental outcomes as psychological health. In Dion and Toner's (1988) research on psychological well-being of students, they found that higher levels of anxiety associated with test taking were found in Chinese students in Canada compared to their Caucasian Canadian counterparts. In general, the non-concurrence of academic achievement and other family and developmental variables need also to be paid attention to.

A review of selected topics on Chinese and immigrant Chinese parenting

Chinese parenting connotes distinctive culture-bound features. In this section, I provide a review of five bodies of literature. In the first topic, considerations related to the study of Chinese parenting, I give background information on why it is necessary to examine Chinese parenting by using approaches other than those derived from Western theories. In the next topic, I single out a concept characterizing Chinese parenting, namely "training," and arrange literature around this concept. Parental expectations and demand plus parental warmth and control have been areas of Chinese parenting mostly discussed in the literature. In the last two topics in this section, I look into literature for possible shifts and changes in parental belief due to immigration, and attempt to give a voice to the important messages in scholarships related to parenting and parents' social cognitions.

Some considerations related to study of Chinese parenting

It is warranted in the research field that using approaches derived from Western theories may not be appropriate in examining Chinese parenting.

Contributions to the cross-cultural study of parenting style in Chinese populations as well as immigrant Chinese populations in the Western cultural context mainly use two approaches: configurational approach (e.g., Baumrind, 1971) and orthogonal approach (e.g., Maccoby & Martin, 1983). A configurational approach measures and classifies parenting style according to a set of attributes, such as values, behaviors, and attitudes. In contrast, an orthogonal approach measures parenting style along separate key dimensions (Lim & Lim, 2003). Differences in conceptualization and variations in the way constructs are operationalized add to the complexity in understanding parenting as it relates to child outcomes.

Baumrind's (1971) widely-used typology of parenting styles is a good example of configurational approach. He puts parenting styles into three categories: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. As a further attempt, Maccoby and Martin (1983) merged Baumrind's configurational approach with earlier orthogonal approaches of two-dimensional framework—demandingness and responsiveness in parenting—resulting in four parenting styles: authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, indulgent parenting and neglectful parenting. Darling and Steinberg (1993) noted that the two approaches do not directly correspond to each other, but closely approximate each other. The conceptual difference inherited in the two approaches warrant cautions when comparing results of cross-cultural studies. For one example, as Lim and Lim (2003) suggested, in Maccoby and Martin's orthogonal framework, control is largely measured by the degree of demandingness in the parenting relationship, while in contrast, Baumrind incorporates other distinguishing features, such as restrictiveness, autonomy granting, and coerciveness.

Some researchers (e.g., Lim & Lim, 2003) suggested that unlike research on White populations, results on how parenting style affects child outcomes are less conclusive in Chinese

and Chinese immigrant families. Based on empirical evidence derived from studies on how parenting style and its influence are related to developmental outcomes in Western societies, there exists a consistent link between parenting style and school performance (e.g., Steinberg et al., 1991), family functioning (e.g., Mupinga, Garrison, & Pierce, 2002), well-being (e.g., Shucksmith, Hendry, & Glendinning, 1995) and self-esteem and self-concept (Coopersmith, 1967). The association of authoritative parenting and positive outcomes in White populations in U.S. is also recognized, including better academic performance, social maturity and responsibility, a wide variety of measures of competence, self-esteem and mental health (Lim & Lim, 2003).

However, in examining the association between authoritarian parenting style and child and adolescent psychosocial outcomes in non-White populations (Chen, Dong, Zhou, 1997; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998), the results are not consistent or conclusive or even contrary to findings for Western populations (e.g., Quoss & Zhao, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1991). In their study of parental influence on child outcomes, Quoss and Zhao (1995) reported that in their Chinese sample, democratic parenting did not predict any item on the satisfaction scale, whereas authoritarian parenting predicted satisfaction with the overall parent-child relationship, which seems contradictory to Western norms. Meanwhile because children expressed dissatisfaction with their family rules and ways of making decisions, this has even confounded the findings related to parent-child relationship in non-Western cultures. The inconsistency of research findings across ethnic groups has been shown in other studies as well, which might have been due to the differences in understandings and interpretation.

Steinberg et al. (1991) conducted a study on parenting styles across four ethnic groups: White, Hispanic-American, African-American, and Asian-American. They confirmed the

correlation between authoritativeness and psychological health consistent across the four ethnic groups. Yet the strength of correlation between authoritativeness and school performance was weaker for African-American, and Asian-American samples. This effect is also seen in an earlier study by Dornbusch et al. (1987), in which authoritative parenting was not predictive of academic achievement among African-Americans and Asian-Americans. Another finding by Dornbusch et al. showed that Asian-American scored the highest on the authoritarian parenting style and as well on academic achievement; they suggested that the success of "Asian children in our public schools cannot be adequately explained in terms of the parenting styles we have studied" (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987, p. 1256). Steinberg et al. (1992) had samilar findings, and they suggested that the better performance of Asian students in the academic field is not directly associated with parenting style, but rather associated strongly with the students' belief about education and life success. Peer support for academic achievement was also reported at the highest level in the Asian group. It appears that the emphasis and high expectation for education amongst the Chinese at the level of peers, family, the community, and culture are prime factors in the academic success of the Chinese (Chao, 1994; Yao, 1985).

Such findings have led contemporary researchers to question the validity of categorizing parenting in the Asian context by using prototypes derived from studies of Western context. For one example, applying Baumrind's (1971) prototypes in research on Chinese families has been considered questionable (Chao, 1994; Gorman, 1998; McBride-Chang & Chang, 1998). In a study by McBride-Chang and Chang (1998) on a sample of Hong Kong Chinese adolescents and their parents, findings showed that parents in the sample were largely unclassifiable in the categories of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting. This problem demonstrated a

similar effect in Chao's (2000) study: the immigrant Chinese parents endorsed more than one typology when presented with separate measures for each of Baumrind's parenting style typologies. To understand this, based on Chao's interpretation, we can only come to the explanation that Chinese parents may be endorsing more than one typology because they see no single typology contains all the aspects of a parenting style in their mind.

The concept of training

In the following section, I single out a concept characterizing Chinese parenting, namely "training," and arrange literature around this concept.

The concept of training as related to beliefs of Chinese parenting

Chinese parenting style is generally believed to be that of parental control (Ji, Jiao, & Jing, 1993; Lin & Fu, 1990). But Chao and Sue (1996) suggested that Chinese actually have "parenting patterns that are distinct from other ethnic groups" (p. 98). Quoss and Zhao (1995) gave further evidence that Chinese authoritarian parenting may be conceptually different from the Western understanding. Lau and Cheung (1987) suggested that there is a need to differentiate between positive parental control that is functional and negative parental control that is dysfunctional in Chinese families. The parenting model of authoritarianism and authoritativeness developed on the basis of Baumrind's (1971) prototypes may fail to capture the essence of Chinese parenting. In their review of parental beliefs in relation to the proper role of a parent, Okagaki and Bingham (2005) determined that cultural groups vary in the ways in which they understand the role and responsibilities of parents.

Chao (1994) examined mothers' beliefs about childrearing and what it means to be a good parent. When observing how immigrant Chinese mothers and third-generation or higher European American mothers defined their roles, in contrast to European American mothers,

Chao found that Chinese immigrant mothers placed a strong emphasis on training and teaching of the children. He claimed that “Chinese child-rearing items involve the concept of training” (Chao, 1994, p. 1111). And being a good mother means that one should start training the child as soon as the child is ready to learn. Training is rooted in Chinese parental control, but also involves parental concern, devotion, involvement and sacrifice (Chao, 1994). As the first researcher to incorporate the concept of training in the interpretation of the Chinese parenting, Wu (1985) believed parental control by Chinese parents is premised on an intention of keeping the family running smoothly. The aim of Chinese parenting is thus interpreted as training and teaching instead of dominating. Such a dimension is not reflected from Baumrind’s (1971) prototypes of parenting style. According to Chao (1994), training reflects a close parent-child relationship, although rules, restrictiveness and even punishment are sometimes also involved. He especially mentioned the indigenous elements of “chiao shun” (Chinese: 教训) and “guan” (Chinese: 管) in describing Chinese parenting, which embody the connotation of training (Chao, 1994; Chen & Luster, 2002; Lin & Fu, 1990).

“Guan” literally means “govern” in English, but its Chinese implication is far more than “govern,” which expands to care and love. In Chao’s interpretation, “parental care, concern, and involvement are synonymous with firm control and governance of the child” (p. 1112). It is thus not surprising to see that it is regarded positive in Chinese culture when teachers and parents exercise control or governing, while the reverse of which is considered to be uncaring or negligent in one’s role (Chao, 2000). Meanwhile, “guan” has been shown to correlate highly with the dimension of warmth in a study by Stewart et al. (1998) on a sample of Hong Kong Chinese late adolescent girls.

The Chinese word “chiao xun” literally means “educating and criticizing” in English, while as a Chinese concept, it also incorporates nurturing proper characters and inculcating children in culturally appropriate behaviors through disciplined teaching (Chen & Luster, 2002). “Chiao xun,” as pointed out by Chao (2000), is an aligned unity between parental nurturance and a set of standards of parenting control, parental strictness, and high involvement and concern, which are unique to Chinese cultural context.

The concept of training characterizes a Chinese conceptualization of parenting. According to Okagaki and Bingham (2005), training, similar to the Western concept of parenting style, is comprised of beliefs about parental demandingness and responsiveness to the child. The demandingness dimension of training emphasizes a continuous monitoring and guidance of children (Chao, 2000). The responsiveness dimension of training emphasizes parental involvement and support, but does not necessarily include overt demonstrations of the parents’ affection for the child.

Chao’s work (1994, 2000) on examining immigrant Chinese mothers’ beliefs about parenting based on the Chinese concept of training has been viewed as an important step in advancing the understanding of parenting within the psychological context of the target culture, rather than using Western psychological theories as the framework (Okagaki & Bingham, 2005).

Training as embedded in daily parenting practice

As what Stewart et al. (1998) have put it, “guan” may not suggest warmth as understood in the West, rather, the composite items of “guan” speak of commitment and involvement—“the warmth/guan linkage could reflect the relationship between the etic (warmth) and the emic (guan)” (p. 354).

A supportive evidence for the above view, Chao (1994, 1996, 2000) noted that, in comparison with European-American mothers, Chinese immigrant mothers endorsed a high level of maternal involvement in their children' lives. For example, these Chinese mothers believed they were the central caretakers of the child. Also, the primary way in which mothers expressed their love to their child was by helping the child succeed. Chao and Sue (1996) suggested that parental control for the Chinese is largely organized around their desire for their children to be successful, particularly in school, which means getting good grades, going to a good university, and being assured of a good job and a good income in the future. However, this kind of control is often accompanied by sacrifices on the parents' part.

In Chao's (1994) study, Chinese mothers who endorsed obedience, respect for work and traditional order when interacting with children on a daily basis, exercised a set of conduct affirming parental authority. Meanwhile they were also reported to be highly involved, sacrificed, and supportive of their children, especially in the area of their schooling. Gorman (1998) studied immigrant Chinese mothers as related to their training practice in daily life. She noticed that in spite of high expectations, the mothers in the study were not "overtly overbearing, but exercised influence in more subtle ways" (Gorman, 1998, p. 79). Such an attitude was manifested in their involvement in their children's daily activities with constant attention to their watchful duties and disciplinary measures (Chen, 2001; Li, 2001; Portes & MacLeod, 1999).

However, very likely parenting demands vary with children's age (Leyendecker et al., 2005). There is evidence that in the case of Chinese parents, training may be exercised only with children from school age onwards (Guo, 2006). Based on observation of the way parents treat children before and after school age, some researchers (Bond, 1986; Chen & Luster, 2002; Johnston & Wong, 2002; Huntsinger et al., 2000) suggested the variation of Chinese parents'

attitude relate to their perception as to whether children are of the age of understanding or not. Yet about at what age the line of understanding should be drawn has not been agreed upon in scholarship. Ho (1986) found that in sharp contrast to the strict discipline they impose on their older children Chinese parents tend to be highly lenient or even indulgent in their attitudes toward the infant and young child. Despite the disagreement over the appropriate age to exercise discipline, it is recognized that changes in parenting behavior are introduced gradually (Kelley & Tseng, 1992). There are also researchers who explain the Chinese parents' attention to and nurturing attitudes towards young children are actually the manifestations of the precursors of training practice (Guo, 2006). Without question, there is a need for more systematic research examining parental behaviors as a function of a child's age.

Training in Chinese immigrant families has a focus on teaching children self-control, which can be for babies as early as 18 month of age (Vigil, 2002). For one example, Vigil, in her study of how Chinese mothers train their young children, observed that Chinese immigrant mothers discouraged their young babies from babbling "senselessly" (Vigil, 2002, p. 437) by looking into the babies' eyes and talking to them in clear words. In such a way, mothers trained babies to respond meaningfully. About the focus of training, Ho (1994) also echoed that an important goal of Chinese childrearing in terms of socialization is early mastery of impulse control. It is believed failure to develop this characteristic in children will lead them to an unsuccessful life in the future. Another good example for training is around how Chinese children learn Chinese characters, which is believed to be without a doubt one of the most demanding tasks that Chinese child need to master from an early age (Bond, 1992). Learning Chinese as part of perceptive training requires both good memory and considerable patience on

the part of the student. It will not be unfamiliar to every Chinese person who has experienced repeated after repeated practice in writing Chinese characters.

In their study of the family contexts of Chinese American children of immigrant parents, including cultural beliefs, languages, child rearing, and beliefs and practices regarding education, Huntsinger et al. (2000) noted that Chinese American parents believe that a child need to learn to take criticism, which is an important aspect of training practice and which prepares children to enter the adult world. Fung (1999) claimed that the most typical approach that Chinese parents use for training children in terms of self-control is through "opportunity education," which means that parents may pick up any chance, for example, from storytelling, settling sibling fights and taking children for a construction site visit, to impart moral and social standards as well as to model appropriate behavior. Model education is also an option. Li and Wang (2004) noted that "Chinese children are encouraged to view those who achieve better as model to emulate while watching out not to repeat the same shortcoming of those who do not do things well" (p. 419). Literature suggests that to achieve optimal effect of training, Chinese parents may adopt both one-way disciplinary strategies (e.g., demanding and punishing) and two-way disciplinary strategies (e.g., discussing, negotiating and explaining).

The concept of training seems especially salient when it comes to children's academic performance. Training for the purpose of laying a solid foundation for children's later success in school and beyond can start with preschoolers. As portrayed by Huntsinger et al. (2000), a common picture in Chinese families is parents make their children routinely practice violin, piano, writing or drawing, along with their continuous monitoring and high involvement.

Dimensions of Chinese parenting

Parental expectation and demand plus parental warmth and control have been areas of Chinese parenting mostly discussed in the literature. In the following topics, I offer an elaboration of the research contribution made in this field.

Parental expectation and demand

Parental expectations are the most salient of many family variables that contribute to children's school achievement (Hoge, Smit, & Crist, 1997; Patrikakou, 1997; Peng & Wright, 1994; Seiginer, 1983). Also, research on parents' expectations has been framed within the context of broader cultural values (Bornstein et al., 1998; Goodnow, 2002; Papousek & Papousek, 1995). Evidence from cross-cultural studies all suggests that Chinese parents have high educational expectations regardless of their socioeconomic status and attained education. Emphasis and high expectations for education amongst the Chinese at the level of peers, family, community, and culture are believed to be prime factors in the academic success of the Chinese (Chao, 1994; Yao, 1985).

As Okagaki and Bingham (2005) reviewed, several researchers have argued that cultural differences in expectations for children's school achievement, along with the general beliefs about value and the role of education, contribute to cross-national differences in children's school achievement. Stevenson et al. (1993) reported that Chinese and Japanese mothers set higher expectations for their child's school performance as compared to American mothers). Chen and Uttal (1988) posited that Chinese parents set high expectations for their children's intellectual performance because of the high value placed on education both historically and in contemporary China, the cultural emphasis on self-improvement, and the strong cultural belief in human malleability.

In Chinese traditions, one often used Chinese idiom in describing Chinese parents is "*wang zi cheng long*" (Chinese: 望子成龙) or "*wang nv cheng feng*" (Chinese: 望女成凤), which literally means a parent's wish for the son to become a dragon or the daughter to become a phoenix. To put it in plain words, the Chinese idiom means that parents wish to see their children eventually achieve higher social status through academic excellence, regardless of their children's ability. Although evidence exists that in current Chinese society adolescents are increasingly endorsing values such as personal competence and autonomy—values associated with an individualistic framework (e.g., Katz et al., 1993), parents' wish to see children succeed is so persistent and seems to be instilled in their children's mind regardless of whether the children agree. In the case of Chinese and immigrant Chinese parents, high expectations are very often accompanied by high demand, in terms of effort, discipline and self-regulation, just to name a few. As plainly quoted, a parent in Li's (2001) interview said, "people say Chinese are intelligent. . . . I disagree. The Chinese success is not the result of intelligence but the result of diligence, self-discipline, and self-regulation" (p. 484).

From another angle, Au and Harackiewicz (1986) conducted a study examining the influence of perceived parental expectations on children's academic performance, which seems to show that broader cultural values and beliefs (e.g., the notion of filial piety that carries the belief that good parents should expect their children to gain honour for the family) can be internalized through parents' expectations. In their study, children in two elementary schools in Hong Kong were selected. Children were asked to do two things. First they were asked to fill in a questionnaire regarding their parents' expectations of their school performance and later they took an arithmetic test under the condition of anticipating either parental evaluation or peer evaluation of their test scores. The result showed that when children expected their parents to be

informed about their performance, those who believed that their parents think highly of them might try harder in order to live up to their parents' expectations, and they might actually do better (Au & Harackiewicz, 1986). In addition, Li (2001) posited that high parental expectations and children's striving for excellence are not only individually and psychologically driven, but largely a result of collective functions of their family, community, and society at large.

On the linkage between parental expectation/demand and children's academic performance, other perspectives also emerge. Based on their review of literature on relations of parental expectations and behavior, Okagaki and Bingham (2005) suggested that due to lack of experience, knowledge base and personal resources for effective follow-through, parents' expectations for their children may not appear in tune with their child-rearing practices. Also, there is a view that parental high expectations on academic performance may be exercised at the expense of the quality of the parent-child relationship and the important developmental outcomes such as children's psychological well-being, which I have discussed. The evidence can be found in Rumbaut's (2000) longitudinal study of children of immigrants, the results indicate that foreign-born students, recently arrived in the U.S., earned higher grades than their native-born, co-ethnic peers but scored lower on self-esteem and higher on depressive symptoms. In addition, as an important methodological consideration, Okagaki and Bingham (2005) pointed out that "parents' expectations are multifaceted. They are, at least, comprised of parents' ideals, parents' realistic assessments of what might happen, and what Goodnow in 2002 has called the 'bottom line'—that is, the minimum acceptable performance" (p. 13).

Parental warmth and control

In terms of parental warmth and care, which was found to be the principal dimension in predicting depression by MacKinnon et al. (1993), there is evidence that Chinese parenting is

high in control (e.g., higher degree of physical control, see Kelley & Tsang, 1992) and restrictiveness (Chao, 1994; Ho, 1986; Kelley & Tsang, 1992; Lin & Fu, 1990) and may be less nurturance, responsiveness and consistency in their parenting (Kelley & Tsang, 1992). Some studies have observed that Asian parents score lower on the warmth/accepting dimension in parenting compared to their Western counterparts (L. H. Chiu, 1987; Hertz & Gullone, 1999). For one example, Chiu (1987) reported that Chinese American mothers were more likely to approve of the expression of hostility and rejection. Kelley and Tseng (1992) also reported in their study that Chinese immigrant mothers expressed child concerns more by taking care of their child's physical needs as compared to Caucasian American mothers' concern more with the child's psychological needs. Moreover, it is also noted that there is little overt affection expressed in the traditional Chinese families (e.g., Huntsinger et al., 2000).

Yet researchers have also presented some other findings. Kelley and Tsang (1992) also noted considerable use of reasoning in response to common child-rearing occurrences. Immigrant Chinese mothers were found to stress obedience to a degree no different from Caucasian American mothers (Kelley & Tsang, 1992). In Lin and Fu's (1990) study of parents' self-reported child-rearing practice with children from kindergarten to second grade, no difference was reported between Chinese and immigrant Chinese as well as Caucasian-American mothers on open expression of affection toward children.

Inconsistency in findings may result from several possible reasons. First, Chinese parents are changing their child-rearing practices due to influences of all sources (Lin & Fu, 1990). Second, the perception and evaluation of affective expression vary across ethnicity and culture. Kelley and Tseng (1992) suggested that some items on parenting control are even incomparable. They gave an example of the interpretation of "yell" in their assessment of parental control in

immigrant Chinese mothers and Caucasian American mothers. They warned that although Chinese mothers reported yelling at their children more than American mothers, the result should be interpreted with caution. In Chinese conceptualization, "yell" is translated into "harsh scolding," which does not totally fall into the Western conceptualization of warmth. Third, the most convincing possibility lies in that immigrant families vary in terms of acculturation stages, which could be a primary factor determining the degree of warmth parents are comfortable in expressing, as is particularly evidenced in the differing results in immigrant Chinese families (Lim & Lim, 2003). Fourth, in the parent-child relationship, both parents and children are active agent. Children's exposure to Western norms can also influence how they perceive parents and their behavior, which likely affect the parent-child relationship and children's psychological well-being (Lim & Lim, 2003).

Possible shifts and changes in parental belief due to immigration

The impact of immigration sees changes in family life, which concurs with the changes in the ecological and cultural contexts as the result of immigration, historical or ideological conditions, and their effects on the goals of socialization (Roer-Stier et al., 2001, as cited in Guo, 2006). Some examples are presented in this section.

In terms of parenting, Kelley and Tseng (1992) reported a departure from traditional Chinese child-rearing patterns. Lin and Fu (1990) pointed out that Chinese families in the east and Chinese-American families, in particular, are changing and departing from strictly defined roles. As well, Chiu and his colleagues (Chiu, Feldman, & Rosenthal, 1992) reported that the immigration experience can cast influence on parental control in families. For example, the Lin and Fu's (1990) study compared Caucasian-American families with Chinese mothers and immigrant Chinese mothers; it was reported that parental control was the highest among Chinese

mothers and the lowest among Caucasian-American mothers, with immigrant Chinese mothers in the middle. In a comparative study of child-rearing practices between immigrant Chinese mothers and Caucasian-American mothers, Kelley and Tseng (1992) reported both groups of mothers used reasoning considerably in response to common child-rearing occurrences. This finding suggests a shift in practice in younger generation Chinese away from traditional child-rearing patterns. The frequency of reasoning reported by immigrant Chinese mothers may have been due to the influence from Western cultural values related to parenting practice (Kelley & Tseng, 1992). In another study, Rosenthal and Feldman (1990) compared perceptions of adolescents in Australia, U.S., and Hong Kong on their family environment. Results showed that the family environment of the immigrant Chinese adolescents has manifested some shifts toward promoting the norms of their host culture, particularly those emphasizing autonomy, as opposed to the values promoted in collectivistic Chinese culture. Support can be found in other research as well. In Chao's (1996) study of parental belief regarding the role of parenting in their children's school success, she noted that some Chinese immigrant mother expressed the view that the new generation of mothers is more balanced in terms of not emphasizing homework as much or pushing children so hard and valuing "human relations" or the ability to socialize and get along with others. Also, Kelley and Tseng (1992) and Lin and Fu (1990) pointed out that immigrant families increasingly adopt the childrearing practices and attitudes of the dominant culture as they become more acculturated. Generally, higher levels of acculturation are associated with less controlling and more nurturing styles of parenting as that in White families (Lim & Lim, 2003).

However, one interesting contradictory example was found in Rosenthal and Feldman's (1991) study. They stated that although families were observed to show openness to the norms of

the host culture, adolescents from immigrant families in both U.S. and Australian samples perceived their family environment to be more structured and controlling as well as emphasizing achievement more than their non-immigrant counterparts, Western or Chinese. The authors suggested that it is possible that immigrant parents become more controlling of their children in an effort to maintain traditional values and to monitor their children's acculturation to Western values.

In line with the above suggestion, the popularly adopted models of heterogeneous and conditional adaptation (Gans, 1997; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1997) have suggested, among other things, effective adaptation can occur without fully relinquishing native cultural practices. Moreover, they also suggested that the success of adaptation depends largely on how an immigrant's personal characteristics interact with the circumstances he or she finds in the host country (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). In addition, studies show that indigenous Chinese cultural values and acculturative struggles have co-contributed to the expectations of Chinese immigrant parents on the educational achievements of their children (Kim & Chun, 1994; Sue & Okazuki, 1990).

Important messages in scholarship related to parenting and parents' social cognitions

In response to the findings generated from research about Chinese parenting, scholars also warn of important considerations to be taken in research undertakings, such as the complexity of parents' social cognitions, the developing and changing nature of parents' social cognitions, the instrumental limitations of the research on parenting, as well as the need for greater awareness of culture's dynamic nature and caution against overgeneralizing.

First, in the past decade, the acknowledged complexity of parents' social cognitions including parents' beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, attributions, or expectations propelled

researchers to use more sophisticated approaches when examining the relations between parents' social cognitions and their child rearing behaviors. As Okagaki and Bingham (2005) reviewed, current theorists (e.g., McGillicuddy-De Lisi & Sigel, 1995; Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002) posited that parents' social cognitions do not function as separate, distinct factors that have a one-on-one effect on childrearing behaviors. Rather, there is interrelation among social cognitions, which means certain social cognitions may act together to potentially direct a childrearing behavior or one may moderate the effect of another on a specific behavior. Brody, Flor, and Gibson (1999) found in their study that mothers' perceptions of adequate family finances and their perception of their parental efficacy and their developmental goals were interrelated. In a situation that mothers perceived themselves adequately managing family resources, they were shown to more likely perceive their parenting as effective. Also, the degree of this perceived effectiveness was correlated with the degree to which mothers set higher expectations for their child.

Second, it is important to recognize the developing and changing nature of parents' social cognitions—parents' social cognitions are not static (Okagaki & Bingham, 2005) and may be refined at the critical moments of life transitions (e.g., when individuals first become parents). Goodnow (2002) hypothesized that it is during transitions in parenthood that parents are most open to new ideas about parenting and to advice from others; it is also possible that changes in parenting behavior are introduced gradually.

Third, instrumental limitations of the research on parenting can lead to our misunderstanding. For instance, Okagaki and Bingham (2005) mentioned a lack of attention, for instance, to how rating scales, reference periods, question format, and surrounding questions can affect parents' responses. In addition, many researchers rely too heavily on Western

psychological perspectives when studying non-Western cultures, which lower the reliability of research findings, for example, the inadequacy of using Baumrind's (1971) prototypes in categorizing Chinese immigrant parents.

Fourth, there is a need for greater awareness of culture's dynamic nature and caution against overgeneralizing cultures by treating Chinese, such as Chinese immigrants or Chinese immigrant women, as a homogenous group, which can result in a failure to recognize the complexity and heterogeneity of the group (Man, 1995). Therefore, it is necessary to attend to the diverging immigration trends and cultural differences among ethnic Chinese immigrant groups in a changing context, because a truly timeless tradition does not exist (Foner, 1997). Profoundly, Lau and Yeung (1996) asked important questions to readers: "What exactly is Chinese culture?" and "Is Chinese culture totally different from Western culture?" (p. 34). As one response, Tweed and Lehman (2002) provided such insight that beside cultural uniqueness, cultures in many ways are more similar than different. As well, an understanding of cultural distinct values may promote learning from ways unlike one's own.

A review of selected topics regarding immigration and its impact

Immigrating to another land is an important life transition for immigrants. The influence of immigration is felt in many aspects of immigrants' life, for example, financial status, study, work, family life and child's schooling. In the following section, I group and review literature under four topics: Canada's immigration policy, organizational and institutional changes, cultural and language barriers to integration for immigrants, as well as perception of children's schooling.

Canada's immigration policy

It is said that one cannot fully understand the experiences of Chinese immigrants without examining their immigration history in Canada (Li, 2001). A review of the relevant historical context follows.

Canada's immigration policy has been described as pragmatic and economic (Man, 1995). Its policies towards the Chinese have "historically been discriminatory in terms of race, gender, and class, and continue to be partial to people from middle and upper class backgrounds" (Man, 1995, p. 306). From the once adopted "head tax" and the "Chinese exclusionary Act" in early immigration policy to immigration policy around 1940s characterized with racist, sexist, and classist elements, the Canadian government deterred the Chinese labourers and their families (but wealthy merchants and their wives, ironically.) from entering Canada despite their invaluable contributions to the construction of the new country. Li (1988) contended that, aside from Aboriginal people, no other ethnic group has suffered such massive torture and destruction for their community in Canada.

The year 1967 witnessed Canada's adopting of a universal point system in selection of immigrants, namely, to admit immigrants on the basis of their educational qualifications and professional preparations (Li, 2001), which allowed Chinese to be admitted under the same conditions as other groups (Hawkins, 1988). Compared to early immigration policy, the progress of this universal selection system, plus the later revisions in 1978 and 1985, lies in that Canada thereafter began to open to immigrants other than just wealthy males. This policy attracted waves of immigrants with diverse ethnic backgrounds. The statistics provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2001) showed that mainland China has been one of the top three source countries of immigration since 1996 and the number one source country since 1998. As a result

of the immigration selection system, these recent immigrants embody characteristics of being highly educated, professionally skilled and intending to permanently settle in Canada by providing skilled work. But scholars point out that the policy is still discriminatory in terms of class (e.g., Man, 1995), because it explicitly shows preference for immigrants with certain socioeconomic status who are expected to better fit for the Canadian labour market with proper education, professional skills and language skills, as well as those who have the required sum of money to qualify as "business class" immigrants. On top of that, the settlement itself poses great challenges due to inadequacies and discriminations embedded in the institutional and organizational processes.

Experiences of integration and barriers for immigrants

Researchers have examined and recorded the experiences of immigrant Chinese in Canada by saying "their expectations reflected their deeply ingrained cultural values, their desire for a better life, their striving for excellence and their struggle to adjust to their visible minority status" (Li, 2001, p. 488). Chun (1995) and Suzuki (1995) referred to the experiences of immigrant Chinese and pointed out that compared to European immigrants, visible minority immigrants have to undergo a more tempestuous acculturative process due to the risk of many potential stressors, such as racial stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. In the following section, I relate to this critical event and present literature around four topics: the institutional and organizational processes, language barrier, multiculturalism; policy and perceived reality; and a stereotypical image of Chinese immigrants.

The institutional and organizational processes

The institutional processes embedded in government, law, education, and professional system "engender and reproduce social inequities in our society" (Man, 1995, p. 309). For example,

despite their increased human capital, Chinese immigrants still have experienced very different economic outcomes in the Canadian labour market compared with the general population of Canada (Wang & Lo, 2004). Even with high skills and years of working experience, many of them are required to go through accreditation examinations and to acquire "Canadian experience" as conditions to enter professional fields. A joint study conducted in 1991 by Alberta Career Development, the Hong Kong Institute of Personal Management and the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission showed that of 512 Hong Kong immigrants between the ages of 30 and 39 years who entered Canada after 1980, 46 percent recorded a drop in income and 62 percent of immigrants also experienced a drop in occupational status. Another survey conducted by S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in 1991 on Chinese immigrant women's needs in the Richmond area reported a significant degree of frustration and drop of self-esteem associated with unemployment, underemployment, low salaries and limited opportunities for advancement (Man, 1995). It turns out that, first, their education achieved back in their homeland was not recognized in Canada, and second, there lacked an accreditation system to calibrate their qualifications. A number of studies also show that many highly qualified and educated Chinese immigrants have experienced a dramatic change in their life before and after immigration—being elite in their home country but finding their qualifications unrecognized in the host countries (Salaff, 2004; Li, 2001). Situations as such clearly explained what Li (2001) has described as *minority ideology*—a state of adjustment in the process of acculturation. Immigrant Chinese parents in Li's study expressed mixed feelings toward minority disadvantages and discrimination one might encounter in employment; meanwhile they resoundingly asserted that their children must be better and stronger in all respects to compete with mainstream people, to win respect and to create a chance for success.

Many researchers have also echoed in their findings that immigrants coming from countries outside of the English/French sphere though with university completion are more likely to be in the lower end of the occupational structure (e.g., Travato & Grindstaff, 1986) and to experience income disparity between white and non-white population (e.g., Burke, 1984). Li (1988), based on the data obtained in Canadian employed labour force from 1971 to 1991, reported that Chinese were under-represented in managerial, scholastic, and administrative positions. It was also noted in Man's (1995) study that some immigrant women were so discouraged by the "irrational demand"— a reflection of institutional discrimination in the host country, that they decided to give up the idea of entering the labour force. As Thomas (1990) in his review of research and literature in the area of immigrant integration pointed out,

> The educational attainment of ethnic groups is not reflected fully in their incomes or occupational attainment. . . . the contrast between the incomes of those born in the First World and those born in the Third World is stronger when controls are introduced for age and education. (p. 18)

The fact that many ethnic minority groups have relatively elevated levels of participation in higher education does suggest that this discrimination operates not in the education system but in the labour market (Secretary of State, Canada, 1987).

Organizational barriers are associated with concrete material changes in immigrants' life experience in Canada. For example, studies (e.g., Man, 1995; Li, 2001) reported that Chinese immigrant women experienced extreme difficulties in day-to-day management of a household due to the lack of a support system in Canada, which were once easily accessible because of proximity with family members or a close knit support network or affordable hired help. Chao

(1996) quoted one of the European American mothers in discussing minority groups who focused on the socioeconomic implications:

> If you are talking about middle- and upper-class kids where you're not dealing with some of the enormous pressure of some of the minority groups…we have the ability, because of the money, to take care of ourselves better. We can get help in the house. We are not so physically exhausted all the time. (p. 408)

Man (1995) stated that the different social organization of Canadian society from the home country such as the size and the geographic feature of the city, the transportation system, the high cost of living, as well as the Canadian school systems can have tremendous impact on the individuals, affecting their everyday living and their relationship with family members. In an example of mother-child relationship, Man found that some external material-based factors especially affected both adolescents and their mothers. For example, adolescents may experience a loss of their independence and freedom (e.g., they used to be able to move around by themselves to attend various social and extracurricular activities with cheap and convenient transportation means) and mothers may experience a decrease in their quality of life and health (e.g., they often need to dovetail their schedules with their children's schedules and chauffeur their kids to their activities from place to place, which can make them feel exhausted at the end of the day). Such a change in life can easily cause conflicts in the family and may also predicate resentment from adolescents.

Concerning financial situations, the obvious changes noticed by mothers in the study include the high price they then had to pay for any hired help, and their husbands were expected to become "Supermen" who could fix anything by themselves. Mothers also mentioned their concerns about children's schools. Although the general impression of Canadian schools was

deemed favourable, relaxed, and conducive to children's learning (Man, 2002), these were also the aspects of schooling that some mothers expressed concerns about (e.g., the discipline is not as strict as in schools in China). Mothers in the study were also concerned about the inadequate hours-of-operation of the school system and daycare services, which was one of the challenges those working mothers had to struggle.

Conversely, some studies also show that migration may as well bring beneficial changes. For example, due to the sustenance requirement, women may also have to enter the host labour market, which can lead to a change in the traditional roles of women and their subjugated positions. Besides the positive effect of engendering equality of the sexes, there are also chances for generating beneficial changes in domestic relations: for example, a husband and a wife may come closer in a joint effort to overcome difficulties such as isolation due to a lack of social networks (Man, 2002).

Language barrier

Language is not only a medium of communication, but also linked to an individual's identity (Lauring, 2008). While it is an obvious truth that speaking the official languages is a key to being a part of the greater Canadian tribe, it is difficult to learn a new language.

For immigrants, language barrier has been considered one of three major obstacles for occupational integration. According to *The Vancouver Sun*, a popular local media in Vancouver, BC, an internal 2012 Immigration Canada report revealed a rising proportion of immigrants, more than 600,000 immigrants work in Canada in a language other than English and French. And most of them, 60 percent, say they cannot carry on a conversation in either of Canada's official languages (Canadian Immigration Report, 2013, April 28). More confusingly, Statistics

Canada surveys show most immigrants arrive in Canada speaking either English or French, and Census data says 98 percent of Canadians speak one of the official languages, but it is not clear exactly how well those languages are being spoken or understood (Ottawa Citizen, 2013, April 27).

A rise was reported in the number of recent economic class Chinese immigrants with a noticeable better educational qualifications accompanied by an increase in the proportion of Chinese possessing the required Canadian language skills, either English or French or both (e.g., a rise from 36 percent in 1980s to 45 percent in 1990s). Wang et al. (2004) suggested a positive correlation could be found between the economic performances of the Chinese immigrants with their Canadian language proficiency: those who spoke both English and French had the highest income (English speaking immigrants did a little better than French speaking immigrants) versus those who spoke non-English-speaking Chinese immigrants earned 45 percent less in total income.

Other studies show contradictory findings: the increase in human capital did not see the same increase in employment income. Chinese immigrants still experience a very difficult economic outcome in the Canadian labour market compared with the general population, and the earning differentials exist for both genders and for all age groups (Wang & Lo, 2004). Wang and Lo (2004) suggested the ability to properly employ language in the communication could be one of the most important reasons. Li's (2001) study mentioned that, although most of the parents believed that the best way to compensate for the disadvantageous status of minorities was through education, interesting enough, from another perspective, a parent added,

> Western culture emphasizes how to express oneself . . . this has something to do with history. In Chinese history, you do not need to say things but you have to show what you have done . . . in Western culture, people evaluate you by what you said more than by what you did. That's why they try as hard as they can to express themselves. (Li, 2001, p. 484)

Language can pose challenges in occupational integration. It can also throw more anxiety in people's daily lives; as one example, according to Ottawa Citizen online, Bowen, a professor at the University of Alberta and expert on access to health care for underserved populations, believes that language is the most important barrier preventing some immigrants from staying healthy (Taylor, 2013, April 27).

Multiculturalism: policy and perceived reality

Enacted as a federal policy in 1971, multiculturalism has been providing all people, immigrants and native-born, a vision that people retain their heritage languages and their cultural identifications while enjoying the full benefits of a citizenship founded on shared rights, freedoms, and obligations (Ungerleider, 2007). Further, "Canada, with its policy of 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework' and its recognition of Aboriginal rights to self-government is one of the few countries which has officially recognized and endorsed both polyethnicity and multinationality" (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 22). With a multiculturalism policy in place, the ideal is that our society legitimates and even promotes continuing cultural differentness. Cultural commentators agree that there is a need to develop an inclusive national identity that recognizes the contribution of all groups (Ungerleider, 2007).

Sometimes, the vision seems elusive and controversial. As Li (2001) mentioned, despite its multicultural policy, ethnic background remains socially significant in Canada. One has to confront the reality that not all Canadians have benefited equally from or embraced with enthusiasm the goals of multiculturalism. Although the Statistics Canada 2001 census has clearly showed that higher education is a gateway to higher income, recent immigrants have substantially less earning power than native-born Canadians, even after 10 years of residence in the country, regardless of their education (Statistics Canada, 2001, as cited in Li, 2001). Often, education and work experience acquired in less developed countries are significantly less valued than human capital obtained in more developed countries. In some instances, the former are not recognized at all. This is a grim reality faced by numerous immigrants in most receiving countries including Canada, the United States, and Australia (Wang & Lo, 2004). Dating back to 1990, Derrick Thomas already pointed out that whatever the causes—be it competition between groups for economic resources and congestible public goods (Richmond, 1988) or the labour market competition or the differing psychological or personality types etc. —the existence of racism limits the opportunities of immigrants and, to the extent that they perceive that social mobility is precluded, some form of disturbance would seem inevitable.

Evidence can also be found in Li's (2001) study of immigrant parents' expectations for their children, in which several parents agreed on the idea: although multiculturalism is written into the government policy in Canada, ipso facto, a policy does not represent a reality, "because you can feel racial discrimination every day, everywhere [and] minority groups, especially visible minority groups are in a very disadvantaged situation" (p. 486). Such a minority view might have also been attributed to other reasons, for example, a language barrier. Nonetheless, it

has brought about the fact that there no short cut to fully realizing the implied promises of multiculturalism.

A stereotypical image of Chinese immigrants

Social psychologists have determined, for example, that stereotypes about an individual's social group can affect performance in domains that are important to the individual's self-concept—a phenomenon that Steele has labeled as *stereotype-threat* (Steele, 1997). Whether or not this is the case, it is reasonable to propose that some stereotypical images about Asians, particularly Chinese immigrants do influence people's lives and even their mindset, such as "the success story" (or "model minority"), the "Gucci Chinese" (or "yacht people"), and "Shy/silent students and surface thinker."

• "The success story" or "Model minority"

It was around 1960s that two influential newspapers *The New York Times* (Petersen, 1966) and *U.S. News and World Report* ("Success Story")featured articles on the educational and economic attainment of Japanese and Chinese immigrants, praising them as hard-working, uncomplaining role models of diligence and achievement. Such an impression of Chinese immigrants could indeed be evidenced at the time in a small population in some areas but then seems to extend into all areas of life in Chinese immigrant population. Later on, a lot of attention has also been given to the school success of Asian Americans because they were reported higher SAT scores, higher achievement test scores, higher grade point averages in both high school and college and above, more years of schooling completed, and higher scores on a number of standardized intelligence tests (Cheung, 1982; Kim & Chun, 1994; Sue & Abe, 1988; Suzuki, 1988). Above all other reasons, cultural reasons (e.g., Confucian teachings) are often seen as contributing to it.

However, research scholarship unfolds a different picture. Zhou (2004) has pointed out that the “model minority” stereotype, frequently imposed on Asian Americans, is a positive image on the surface but in fact sets Asian Americans apart from other Americans and hold them to higher than average standards. It was noted in the previous research that in order to meet the image of model minority, many Chinese immigrant children often have to manage over-loaded pressure and anxiety. For example, lower levels of psychological well-being were found associated with the stress of living up to the model minority stereotype of being Asian (Ahn Toupin & Son, 1991). In addition, Chao (1998) also contended that these contentions or claims overlook or gloss over the needs of many Asian Americans, primarily because their outstanding educational success often has been achieved at a disproportionate investment and sacrifice from the family. From another perspective, Sue and Okazaki (1990) advanced an explanation by relating to the notion of relative functionalism, which hypothesized that the greater the entry barriers into non-educational areas, the more salient education can become as the only means of achieving mobility. They argued that, because Asian Americans are constrained by the structure of opportunity for upward mobility in areas such as politics, sports, and entertainment, the experience and perception of blocked mobility in these non-educational areas prompt Asian Americans to devote more energy to education and disproportionately succeed in it. In addition, these media certainly have, if not intentionally, overlooked one important structural factor—the immigration selectivity, which disproportionately favours immigrants from urban middle-class backgrounds with high SES (Zhou & Kim, forthcoming).

• “Gucci Chinese” or “Yacht people”

It is revealed in the literature that since late 1980s, the media (e.g., Calgary Herald, 1988, Feb 14; Halifax Chronicle Herald, 1989, June 24) coverage of recent Chinese immigrants from Hong

Kong labeled Chinese immigrants as “Gucci Chinese” or “Yacht people” because of the wealth they brought to Canada, although these immigrants might only account for very small percentage of the immigrant population at the time. Descriptions about these immigrant Chinese were often associated with luxuries, wealth and entrepreneurial skills (e.g., Halifax Chronicle Herald, 1988, January 25; Vancouver Sun, 1989, May 26).

There was, indeed, a class of rich investors and entrepreneurs with high consumption powers among Chinese immigrants, but, as Wang et al. (2004) pointed out, “their cash was brought to Canada, not earned here, and their powers of consumption may not be sustainable” (p. 28). This media-created image of Chinese immigrants is perceived by many as being the reality, while in fact, this image typifies only a small minority, and is far from the actual “lived experiences” of most of the Chinese immigrants—particularly Chinese immigrant women, who are not even considered by the media (Man, 1995).

• Shy/silent students and surface thinker

Chinese people, including students are often described as shy, silent, reserved and inert, or on the positive side, quiet but hardworking. Chan (1999) mentioned in her *The Chinese learner—a question of style* that overseas Chinese learners usually have to overcome a number of difficulties in the form of adaptation, language learning, and a lack of social contacts, often coupled with a lack of understanding by Western educators about the behavior of Chinese students in the classroom, for example, “the lack of spontaneity or preference for conforming” (p. 296).

Based on a self-reported study exploring the use of silence of immigrant Chinese students in the language arts classroom, Hu and Fell-Eisenkraft (2003) identified four themes running through students’ perceptions on their verbal behavior—silence as a result of being shy; silence

out of fear of not having correct answer; silence due to unfamiliarity with talking to learn; and silence because of a lack of confidence in speaking English. Hu and Fell-Eisenkraft further noted that the shyness of the students in their study actually demonstrated a culturally learned style of communication along with other technical reasons (e.g., unfamiliarity with academic discourse and personality) or social reasons (e.g., social introversion). Hu and Fell-Eisenkraft related to the concept of filial piety in Confucian ideology and believed that the hierarchical structure of the family or school or larger community and the in tacit rules embedded in the concept (e.g., obedience and respect for the authority) should to a great extent account for the verbal behavior of these students. Therefore, "it is not surprising that when these students found themselves in American classrooms where they need to speak to be part of the learning community, they often resort to what they have been enculturated with—silence" (Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003, p. 57). To speak up in class and to express your own opinion are deemed culturally appropriate in the North-American context—a way of showing your assertive individuality, which may not be the same case in the Chinese cultural context.

Many Chinese students when being newly introduced to Canadian universities may have experienced the cultural shock at the amount of talk that is expected of the students in the class. Some later come to understand that the view of talk as a medium for learning is an important "epistemic function of talk" (Vygotsky, 1986).

Chinese students are also seen as surface thinkers. *Surface* versus *deep* learning approaches was initially coined by Marton and Saljo (1976) in evaluating the comprehension ability of Swedish university students. Students were asked to read an academic article and then to explain what and how they had learned. The result was interpreted as coming to two approaches of learning—namely, the "surface learning" and "the deep learning." Memorization

of details or key terms was grouped under surface learning approaches, which focus on the reading at word and sentence level and students who adopted this approach typically could not explain the authors' message and could only recall isolated factual fragments of the passage. On the opposite side, the students who adopted deep learning approaches tended to focus on the themes and main ideas and generally tried to process the reading for meaning and demonstrated a more sophisticated comprehension of the authors' intentions and also frequently used extracts from the reading to support their reasoning (Marton & Saljo, 1976).

Incorporating important elements from Marton and Saljo (1976), Biggs (1993, Learning Process Questionnaire[LPQ]; Student Process Questionnaire[SPQ]) in Australia and Entwistle (1983, Approaches to Studying Inventory[ASI]) in the UK developed systematic inventories in evaluating students' learning approaches. "Achieving" was added as the third approach, which dictates that student adopting this approach can use any strategy, be it rote memorizing or understanding the basic principles, to maximize their chances of academic success.

In Watkins et al.'s (2000) study on non-Western students' learning approaches, rather inconsistent results were reported, which were referred to as "the paradox of the Chinese learner" (p. 61): Chinese students were reported adopting memorizing or, in other words, rote learning strategies, which were supposed to lead to poor learning outcomes and which might lead to the expected result that Chinese students perform badly academically. However, the actual result did not turn out so. Also, as mentioned earlier in the review, Chinese students use skills such as repetition as well as memorization—unfortunately also perceived as surface learning strategies—in order to achieve deep understanding.

Tweed and Lehman (2002) suggested that some of the studies using Biggs's (1987) Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) are problematic owing to Western cultural assumptions injected

into the SPQ scale. For one example, the items that are represented in deep learning relate to intrinsic motivation. For example, Dewey (2008) promoted the notion that education should be its own end and that education loses meaning if pursued for an external purpose. However, the view that leaning is the means to an end, which is considered part of the Confucian conception of learning, is represented in the surface items of the SPQ. Around the interpretation about memorizing and repetition, Watkins (2000) argued that Chinese viewed memorizing and understanding as separate but rather interlocking processes (Biggs, 1996; Kember, 1996; Marton et al., 1997) and further, they believed that understanding could be developed through memorizing.

More importantly, Tweed and Lehman (2002) reminded us that the "surface" versus "deep" learning model initially used by Marton and Saljo (1976) was not originally intended for cross-cultural research.

Self-esteem and perception of self

In the psychological research, self-esteem and perceptions of self are the two main domains that capture the effect of integration experiences on the psychology of immigrants. For the former, the principles of motivating theories of conditional adaptation have permeated much of the research on immigrants' subjective experiences including social psychological research on race/ethnicity and personal self-esteem (Porter & Washington, 1993). In his review of scholarship on cultural adaptation of immigrants into mainstreams practices, Schnittker (2002) noted inconclusiveness in research findings—empirical studies did not seem to support the hypothesis that acculturation into mainstream practices should positively associate with an increase in self-esteem; instead, some scholars frequently have discovered negative result (e.g., Rumbaut, 1997). As a response, some researchers argue that retaining some practices associated

with one's traditional culture may be beneficial to self-esteem, especially in racially congruous neighbourhoods (Ying, 1995).

In a further attempt to explore the relationships between acculturation and self-esteem, Schnittker (2002) used a sample of adult Chinese immigrants to examine the effects of English language use, Chinese cultural participation, and neighbourhood Chinese composition on self-esteem. His finding showed that immigrants who use primarily English have higher self-esteem than those who use primarily Chinese. Aside from effects of language competence, education, income, length of stay, and cultural participation, Schnittker (2002) also found that perceived friend support is also significantly associated with self-esteem.Noteworthy, he also found the moderating effects of the neighbourhood co-ethnicity: English language use was related most positively to self-esteem in predominantly non-Chinese neighbours, and Chinese cultural participation was related positively to self-esteem only in predominantly Chinese neighbourhoods (p. 71). Both income and education along with the length of stay in the immigrated country increase self-esteem significantly (Schnittker, 2002).

Concerning perception of self, the topic is mostly examined in the process of value negotiation in the context of comparisons between collectivistic and individualistic cultures, or in some literature, between East and West. The study conducted by Lim and Wieling (2004) on Chinese American women's negotiation of differences in values and perceptions of the self reveals that in the cultural borderlands of East and West, contradictions and ambiguities were experienced by these women in their struggle to be both adaptive and culturally appropriate. The study showed that although there were discernible movements toward greater expressed independence, mutuality, self-care, and self-esteem, one key issue was the need to be culturally and contextually appropriate. Facing the challenge of being Chinese and American, immigrant

American women in the study also expressed great hopes for their children and "saw that being different can be an asset instead of a liability" (Lim & Wieling, 2004, p. 151). Besides, it is also indicated in the literature that English language use is believed to imply broader benefits to an immigrant's sense of self, although the significance may decrease due largely to the effects of education and income (Schnittker, 2002).

Adaptation and adjustment

Good or bad, immigrants' experiences have been transformed as a result of the difference in the social organization of the two societies. It was also reported that some immigrants have eventually become flexible and adopted what Warren (1986) termed a "positive and pragmatic" attitude toward their new positions. Having experienced a loss of their previous socioeconomic status and quite a drop in income, some immigrants rationalized that they were learning a different way of doing things in a new country, and that they were paving their way for the future. As Man (1995) explained, "they were cognizant of the futility of hoping for changes in processes which are institutionalized and embedded in the social system. Since they could not transform the macrostructure, they therefore resolved to changing their own attitude toward their situations" (p. 312). In the following section, I provide a review of community force and ethnic social structures as well as parenting practices and coping strategies in immigrant families.

Community force and ethnic social structures

Group experience at the community level forms part of important acculturative experience of Chinese immigrants. According to Ogbu and his associates, community forces are the products of sociocultural adaptation embedded within an ethnic community, which entails specific beliefs, interpretations, and coping strategies that an ethnic group adopts in response to often hostile

societal treatment (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1974; Ogbu & Simon, 1998). While community forces shape an ethnic group's orientation toward social mobility and promote specific coping strategies and behavioral patterns, they also mediate the process of social capital formation in the community (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Zhou and Kim argued that the intangible community forces and social capital must be supported by tangible ethnic social structure in order to generate resources for upward mobility beyond mere survival. One good example is found in Zhou and Kim's (2006) examination of specific ethnic social structures, namely ethnic language schools and afterschool establishments that target children and youth. They found that ethnicity could create an advantageous social environment conducive to education by developing effective ethnic systems of supplementary education and other institutions. Besides, socializing with people with common backgrounds and experiences creates a sense of continuity and a stabilizing force in a new country (Warren, 1986). Such a theory was found applicable to the Chinese immigrant community (Man, 2002).

Parenting practices and coping strategies in immigrant families

Adaptive responses are also reflected in a departure from traditional practices. Gorman (1998) concluded that immigrant Chinese mothers in her study practiced a style of parenting that embodied a combination of traditional Chinese approaches and mainstream American ways. I have reviewed this further in this dissertation in the section entitled *Shifts and changes in parental belief due to immigration.*

Literature reveals that the way that immigrant Chinese parents prepare their children to adequately function in the host society and to eventually succeed may cover these means: First, to overcome the disadvantages of belonging to a minority group, immigrant Chinese parents constantly remind their children that they must do better than the White majority (e.g., in the area

of school work or in their acquisition of job-related skills) if they want to earn respect, to maximize the chance of success, and to minimize damaging outcomes (Li, 2001). Second, immigrant Chinese parents are involved in their children's selection of future areas of study or profession in recognition of the labour demands of the host country. About this, Huntsinger et al. (2000) and Li (2001) pointed out that Chinese immigrant parents, being aware of their language deficiencies, assist their children in mathematics, technology and science from early childhood because these subjects are seen as universal subjects and lead to areas of specialization. To quote a parent, "as a minority member, your choice of specialization is crucial for your future employment" (Li, 2001, p. 486), sometimes even at the expense of overlooking children's own interests in some cases. Third, immigrant Chinese parents train their children to be bicultural through incorporation of beliefs and practices in the host society in parenting (Gorman, 1998; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000), maintenance of family ties with family members, relatives, and friends, living far or close, and language assistance in both Chinese and English at home and in schools and making use of other resources including tutoring and weekend Chinese school. As some researchers (e.g., Li, 2001; Jambunathan, Burts, & Pierce, 2000) noted the strong bond that immigrant Chinese maintain with their home country, not necessarily in physical sense though, can help them implement an ancestral worldviews which are strongly believed to be effective in helping one succeed, especially in terms of self-cultivation and motivation for excellence. Moreover, Schnittker's (2002) study on acculturation and self-esteem supported the argument of the previous researcher that, among other things, the effective adaptation can occur without fully relinquishing native cultural practices.

Perception of school education in Canada and China

Studies have shown that perceptions of school systems in Canada manifest a rather mixed repertoire of feelings among immigrant community. In the following section, I arrange related literature mainly through two perspectives: a comparative view of strength and weakness in the educational systems and home-school communication.

A comparative view of strength and weakness in the educational systems

There is a general impression that Chinese parents view Canadian schools as more inclusive and open and able to meet the emotional needs of children while Chinese schools have more intense comparison and competition (e.g., the competition for limited places means that formal education for the Chinese children can begin at kindergarten age or even younger).

In Man's (1995) study of experiences of Chinese immigrant women as related to organizational and institutional process, she noted that while some mothers worried about their children's schooling and the lack of discipline and homework, the general impression of some other mothers about the organization of Canadian schools was generally deemed favourable. The acknowledged positive aspects of Canadian school could be summarized as more relaxed, conducive to children's learning, and more enjoyable for children.

Yet quite often, school practice is believed to fall behind the high level of expectations of some Chinese immigrant parents regarding their children's academic achievement. In Li's (2001) study, it was noted that, while some parents expressed dissatisfaction with 'weaker' intellectual challenges in Canadian schools, some other parents expressed appreciation for the inclusiveness and openness of the Canadian school system. About the latter, one parent especially mentioned that "in China, some schools label students by their grades. . . . It may damage their confidence for lifelong" (Li, 2001, p. 485). Also, "the strict academic training in China did help children

develop good study habits; however, it directed them only towards an academic journey, regardless of their own interests, talents, and abilities" (p. 485).

It is obvious that the fun and open side of Canadian education is favoured over the strict and routine side of Chinese education. According to *Education Canada* (2013), seventeen immigrant students in the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education volunteered to participate in a study about their conceptions of learning. Participants were able to relate their experiences, observations, assumptions, and ideals regarding education and learning in elementary school, both in their homeland and in Canada. The elementary level learning in their native countries was described as a process in which "pupils play a passive role, take little initiative, and are not encouraged to share what they know and understand" (Duchesne, 2013). Meanwhile some respondents also evoked in their interviews a rather dynamic conception of the learning process. These students painted a picture of an active learner: a pupil who experiments, observes, explores, and asks for help from her parents; a pupil who plays educational games, works with others and makes jokes; a pupil who shares learning, asks questions, expresses thoughts and feelings; a pupil who develops his talents and sees himself as in charge of his learning; a pupil who learns by diverse means, manifests the desire to better herself, asks for help when faced with a problem, tries to understand, demonstrates openness, and pursues her learning after class – these are conceptions of learning that differ dramatically from those to which the students in the study were exposed in childhood (and that indeed still prevail in some of those countries). The above-mentioned conceptions are believed to be consistent with what is promoted in Canadian schools, i.e., the student-centered teaching that favours a constructivist learning approach.

Besides, there exists a view that although educational systems in Canada and China differ considerably in terms of cultural background, learning goals, demographic compositions, the

abundance of resources, and pedagogical practices etc., educational systems in both countries should benefit from interactions, communications, and learning from each other by taking into consideration each system's unique strengths (e.g., Jin Li, 2012; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). As in Jun Li's (2001) study, some parents mentioned there were good points in both cultures in terms of education. It would be wise if cultures could learn from each other. Indeed, the recent decade has witnessed both educational systems adopt some changes. For example, in China, schools are trying to reduce student workload; in Canada, there is an awareness to increase students' workload. It is recognized that Eastern educational systems focus on classroom teaching and exam writing. Therefore, an area for improvement is that Chinese students need more hands-on experiences. But the idea of copying one system into another should be given much caution. For example, it is unquestionable that China's examination-dominated educational system needs reform, but adopting the Canadian type of test measures, such as the kind of authentic test using portfolios in evaluating students' performance may not be affordable for Chinese schools.

Home-school communication

One of the major educational concerns involves home-school communication. Home and school form the microsystems of a child's educational development. The connection between home and school is integral to a cohesive and effective learning environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Constructive home-school communication is believed to positively associate with children's academic achievement and motivation (Norris, 1999; Watkins, 1997) and negatively associated with children's drop-out rates (Bhattacharya, 2000). In Dyson's (2001) review of home-school communication literature, she cited from Epstein (1990) and Healey (1994) that teachers' communication with parents increases many forms of parental involvement in school or at home. Also effective communication can also facilitate teachers in fulfilling their responsibilities

(Bowman, 1989). Probably more important, parents' knowledge of school practices of multicultural education depends on the effectiveness of home-school communication (Dyson, 2001). While it is acknowledged that parental involvement in education is particularly important for elementary school children whose native language is not English, there exist several obstacles to effective communication between immigrant parents and the schools as suggested in the literature.

First, language barriers are found to be one of the major reasons deterring Chinese immigrant parents in Canada or the US from communicating with teachers and schools (Bhattacharya, 2000; Constantino et al., 1995; Gougeon, 1993). Reasons such as lack of English speaking skills and the inconvenience of having to rely on interpreters are quite common for explaining ineffective communication. Real and perceived language barriers may also have reduced parents' willingness to be involved in school events (Lee & Manning, 2001). In terms of communication style, Asian people are generally succinct whereas North Americans tend to favour eloquence of speech (Yang, 1993).

Second, Constantino et al. (1995) also brought forward another barrier that recent Chinese immigrants in Canada or the U.S. encountered: the gap between their native culture and that of mainstream North America. For example, parents' understanding of school involvement often differ from that of teachers and school staff in North American elementary schools and thus fail to meet school expectations. In Western cultures, parent involvement is generally defined within certain frames and connotes specific ways of involvement such as volunteering in schools, attending school activities, and reviewing student homework etc. However, as some scholars suggested, popularly acknowledged roles of involvement may not have counterparts in some other cultures and thus what some parents put to action based on their own understanding

of involvement can be deemed unacceptable in the eyes of tradition defenders (Auerbach, 1989; Lopez, 2001; Valdes, 1996). This point was illustrated by a very good example in Lopez's (2001) article exploring how an immigrant family understood involvement as a means of instilling in their children the value of education through the medium of hard work, and viewed taking their children to work as a form of involvement. Such an attempt expands the concept of "parental involvement" from its usual way of definition to a broader understanding, which to a certain degree decodes some of the misunderstandings around perceived parents' indifference to children's school education and lack of involvement. As another example, Theilheimer (2001) suggested that parents who have grown up in culture outside North America may hold different views of schools and children than those of their children's teachers. Evidence can be found in the great importance attached to education and the stress of academic achievement. Coupled with high expectations for their children (Ran, 2001), Chinese mothers in Chao's (1996) study believed in direct intervention which is usually considered strict in their children's learning. Such an educational emphasis was conceived to be incongruent with the child-centered approach generally practiced in schools in Canada (Holmes, 1998). For example, when communicating with the school immigrant Chinese mothers in Dyson's (2001) study tended to focus on public affairs such as school events and benefits and on their children's academic achievement because they needed to determine what extra academic support to provide at home.

Third, unfamiliarity with school practice, including lack of knowledge as to how to communicate with local schools can also deter effective communication between immigrant parents and schools. For example, Dyson (2001) reported the majority of immigrant Chinese parents in her study stated that they were unaware of any multicultural education programs in

their children's schools because the schools "either didn't have such a program or did not communicate it explicitly to children or parents" (p. 468).

In summary, cultural and linguistic differences may prevent effective home-school communication and hence hinder parental involvement in school activities. Furthermore, as Commins (1992) suggested, immigrant minority parents' lack of involvement is often misinterpreted by school personnel as a lack of interest in their children's academic work.

A review of out-of-school time (OST) related literature

In the following, my review of OST related literature is grouped under three topics: Chinese OST activities and programs, OST in North American context, and other OST related literature: benefits, issues and concerns. The first topic regarding Chinese OST activities and programs provides important background information in relation to how the Chinese concept of *ke wai huo dong* is developed, interpreted and evolved. The topic also covers knowledge about social forms and phenomenon related to OST in China. OST in North American context, as the title implies, deals with literature in relation to interpretations and forms of OST in the contemporary North American context. Other OST related literature includes: benefits, issues and concerns; here I will look at more specific aspects of OST related discussions found in prior studies.

Background: Chinese out-of-school time (OST) activities or programs—ke wai huo dong

So far, the only closest-in-meaning equivalent of *out-of-school* time or *after-school* activities/programs in Chinese I could find is *ke wai huo dong* (Chinese: 课外活动), while often the English translation for *ke wai huo dong* is *extracurricular activities*. As a matter of fact, even in the Western scholarship, the term "OST activates" is used interchangeably with the term "extracurricular activities" (e.g., Simpkins, 2003; Eccles & Barber, 1999). In nature, Chinese words often are polysemous which may result in the ambiguity of meaning. Take *ke wai huo*

dong for example. The word *ke* (Chinese: 课) can be interpreted as class hours, classroom, or subject course, etc. *Wai* (Chinese: 外) in Chinese also has multiple meanings including: outside, after, not in, not limited to, foreign, far, external, or secondary etc. The Chinese word *huo dong* (Chinese: 活动) also embodies several meanings: activities in general or in specific sense such as game, play and sports, or more confusingly, any abstract thinking activities or phenomenon related to human beings.

Wong and Chow (2002) argued that such ambiguity in meaning is in fact learned and deliberate out of historical reasons. At the beginning of school education in Chinese history learning in schools was considered primary while *ke wai huo dong* was deemed secondary or subjugated to school learning. The use of *ke wai huo dong* was mainly seen in the attempts to internalize social values and as a bonus in providing students learning opportunities at their free will. It is therefore not easy to give *ke wai huo dong* one concrete definition.

Very likely the Chinese term *ke wai huo dong* overlaps in meaning with *out-of-school time activities* or *after-school activities* or *extracurricular activities* or possibly some other terms as well in Western conceptions. In realiy, in Western understanding, there is also an array of terms denoted to the interpretations of the activities outside regular school hours, which I discuss later.

The beginning of ke wai huo dong

In the recorded history of Chinese education, the mention of *ke wai huo dong* can be traced back to as early as two thousand years ago in the Chinese classic *Xue Ji* (Chinese: 学记 (2010)) which is considered the world's first monograph on education and pedagogy. It is pointed out in *Xue Ji* that it is necessary that "within scheduled school hours curriculum-based formal instruction

should be given while out of scheduled school hours students should also be assigned proper extracurricular work (*ke wai huo dong*) in order to promote personal interest and development" (Chinese: 时教必有正业，退息必有居学). To support this theory, it further argues that

> Without learning all kinds of musical instruments out of school, it is impossible to be especially good at playing musical instruments in class; without applying various language rhetoric skills out of school, it is impossible to be especially good at understanding classics in class; without learning different work in life situations out of school, it is impossible to be especially good at knowledge such as etiquette in class. The aforementioned to-do-things in out-of-school time can be regarded as miscellaneous or not formal business of learning, carried out for practice or recreational purposes. Without interest in them, the learning of formal knowledge will not be given positive and passionate treatment (Chinese:
> 不学操缦，不能安弦；不学博依，不能安诗；不学杂服，不能安礼。不兴其艺，不能乐学). (*Xue Ji*)

Such was considered the appropriate attitude of a virtuous learner in his or her approach to learning—to achieve the goal of education one should make good use of both in-school as well as out-of-school time effectively. To this point, *ke wai huo dong* was not considered a separate domain of personal development but a means to achieve effective formal learning.

Some interpretations of ke wai huo dong in contemporary Chinese educational context

Continuing into contemporary Chinese context, it has been noticed that the concept of *ke wai huo dong* in the educational context has taken on new and different interpretations.

In modern China's first monograph about *ke wai huo dong*, Lee Sangxu, Xu Junmei and Xu Junfan (1936) stated that "about the definition of *ke wai huo dong*, many people have mentioned. . . . while with no exception, their interpretation are 'activities or programs that student are involved outside their formal school time, which carry no academic credit.'" This is in line with the definition of "extracurricular activities" given by the *American Education Dictionary*, in which it is stated that

> programs and events, carrying no academic credit, sponsored and organized by pupils' or students' organizations or by the educational institution, designed to entertain, instruct, and/or provide exercise of interests and abilities, subject to some measures of control by the institution. (Good, 1945, p. 7)

On the most popular Chinese search engine Baidu, *ke wai huo dong* is defined as

> activities or programs that are considered supplementary to classroom instruction, organized and structured by the school administration or outside educational organizations, developed to meet the needs of the individual learners as well as the needs of the schools, and carried out under the direct or indirect supervision of educational experts. (baike.baidu, 2013, n.d.)

Around the function of *ke wai huo dong*, it is stated that "they provide important means for fully developing the talent of students; they are necessary in mending the gap between the school and the life reality; and they can enrich students' spiritual life." In this interpretation, I notice the emergence of "outside educational organizations" and "direct or indirect supervision of educational experts." Some expansion of the concept of learning can be also detected, for example, "mending the gap between the school and the life reality as well as bringing enrichment

to students' spiritual life." It seems gradually the connotation extends into the domain of personal development of the learners.

On another website, Wikipedia, *ke wai huo dong* is interpreted as "entertainment, moral enhancement opportunities and practices that are organized by the educational organizations in order to broaden and deepen students' knowledge and enhance students' competitiveness" (zh.wikipedia, 2013, March 14). This definition differs from previous ones in that it clearly points to moral enhancement opportunities as one of the main functions of *ke wai huo dong*.

In *Pedagogy of Education* (Wang & Wang, 1999), a textbook designed for students enrolled in the Faculty of Education in Chinese universities, a more systematic version of *ke wai huo dong* is provided, which includes a definition of *ke wai huo dong,* a delineation of the features of *ke wai huo dong,* an explanation of the functions of *ke wai huo dong,* and most notably a political orientation of *ke wai huo dong.* It states in the book that a student's activities should consist of both learning activities in the classroom as well as the students' life outside the classroom. It is considered an important part of school education that school should organize activities for students outside the classroom. Wang and Wang (1999) quoted from Vasyl Sukhomlynsky (1918-1970) that *ke wai huo dong* is the "origin of intellectual life for students, leading them to arrive at the right path for scientific thinking" (p. 13). In addition, *ke wai huo dong* is "one of the important conditions for personality development" (p. 17). Sukhomlynsky (in Zhao, 1983) believed that only when children had five to seven hours free for their use, could they develop into well-rounded and wise human beings, which could not be by-passed when talking about well-rounded development, or when talking about cultivating qualitative personality, hobbies and gifted intelligence.

The definition of *ke wai huo dong* provided by Wang and Wang (1999) is: "purposeful, planned and structured educational activities falling outside the school curriculum and carried out by the school; aiming at students, *ke wai huo dong* helps construct their out-of-school/after-school life in good forms" (p.484). This definition seems not in complete congruence with what Sukhomlynsky has promoted, at least on the point that children should have five to seven hours free for their use. Besides, this definition leaves a question about who exactly is the main actor in *ke wai huo dong*, the school or the children.

Specifically, Wang and Wang (1999) have provided a list of features attached to the definition of *ke wai huo dong*. First, *ke wai huo dong* possesses flexibility as opposed to classroom teaching which is expected to follow what the teaching plans, curriculum, text books and syllabus have stipulated, plus the content and organization of which can be relatively stable. The implication is that *ke wai huo dong* does not have to follow the teaching plans, curriculum, text books and syllabus and can take on colourful, diversified and practical features. For example, the flexibility can be reflected in the number of participants (can vary in number), the length of activities (can be long or short), as well as who will be the supervisors (can be teachers, parents with certain expertise, or even students with talents). The evaluation method of *ke wai huo dong* can also be flexible. Instead of using tests or marks, the evaluation of *ke wai huo dong* can be taken in the forms of recitals, contests, exhibitions, round-table discussions or forums. Second, *ke wai huo dong* possesses the feature of openness, structurally (not restricted by teaching plans) and physically (not limited within the walls around the schools). So *ke wai huo dong* provides chances to expose students to any possible activities in their lives that accord with the educational requirement and benefit students' bodies and minds. Third, *ke wai huo dong* can involve knowledge from across subjects. In that case, students' *ke wai huo dong* doesn't have to

center around a specific subject area similar to what teachers usually do in the classroom, instead, a comprehensive application of knowledge from various subjects is preferred. Forth, students' personal interests and hobbies are given consideration. Students can voluntarily choose the kind of *ke wai huo dong* activities that attract them, stimulate their interests, and satisfy their psychological needs. Fifth, *ke wai huo dong* allows students certain autonomy as opposed to the classroom learning. Although *ke wai huo dong* is considered as students' own activities, to maximize the effect and benefit, it is believed the guidance and supervision from teachers may be preferred.

In terms of the functions of *ke wai huo dong*, Wang and Wang (1999) stated that *ke wai huo dong* provides an important path for the realization of educational goals. Taking advantage of its distinctive features, *ke wai huo dong* should be organized and carried out under certain guidance to promote well-rounded development of students and to foster their creativity and personality. This function is reflected in the following two points. First, *ke wai huo dong* enriches students' lives, broadens their vision of the world, and is a close link between students and the society. This is especially true for elementary and secondary school students who are at the critical stage of growth physically, intellectually and psychologically. More importantly and meaningfully, participation in enriched *ke wai huo dong* can effectively protect students from the influence of an unhealthy environment. The thought is very much derived from what Sukhomlynsky has promoted in his educational approach to moral education, which involves sensitizing his students to beauty in Mother Nature, in art and in human relations; and encouraging students to take responsibility for their living environment. Ultimately, students should be well developed morally, intellectually, physically, aesthetically, and in work ethics as well. Second, *ke wai huo dong* can help evoke students' interests, bring out the potential talents,

and foster pioneering spirit as well as creativity. Whatever forms *ke wai huo dong* takes (i.e., science, technology, art, sport, social survey, or social practice), it is supposed to take into consideration students' dispositions and personal interests, to give them a broad venue to show talents, and to allow students great opportunities to exercise knowledge in problem-finding, problem-analyzing as well as problem-solving. As a result this should lead to the shaping of a positive self-acknowledgement. In this sense, the unique function of *ke wai huo dong* is especially advantageous in the development of a sense of ownership and a distinctive personality, which cannot be replaced by other means.

The version provided by Wang and Wang (1999) embodies very obvious political and moral orientation. Regarding the requirement and organization of *ke wai huo dong,* it is stated in the text that *ke wai huo dong* should be carried out in ways that contribute to intellectual, physical, and moral development of students. More importantly, the requirement and organization should be in line with the direction of the socialist cause. To be specific, components of the socialist construction should be incorporated in *ke wai huo dong.* Likewise, the text also stipulates that the engagement in *ke wai huo dong* should expand students' mind, enhance their ideological and political awareness, and help them arrive at a level of morality that closely connects their learning with the socialist construction cause. To achieve such a purpose, the content of *ke wai huo dong* must be healthy, morally accepted and inspiring aside from being scientific, informative, and interesting.

In this version of *ke wai huo dong,* the guidance and leadership lie largely with the schools. It is emphasized that schools should be involved in the responsibilities such as organizing, promoting, and allocating resources (i.e., human resources, material resources, financial resources as well as facilities).

Generally speaking, the above mentioned interpretations of Chinese concept *ke wai huo dong* all have something to do with the activity arrangement out of official school hours whereas each of them has some distinctive features. What they have in common can be, in my opinion, summarized into three points. First, in theory, regardless of the variations found in definitions, the usage of *ke wai huo dong* is in expanding school education, likely in different directions though. This is in consistent with what Confucian classics has promoted that education should not be implemented just in the school of a narrow sense, and knowledge is not just what is written in books. The society as a whole is a school and the ultimate objective of education is to cultivate students to adapt and to serve this society. Education happens in a learning environment of a broad sense—i.e., learning through studying subjects, learning through entertaining, learning through labour, and learning through community service, etc. Second, Chinese interpretations of the concept of out-of-school time (OST) activities are intimately interconnected with an obvious purpose of personal and moral development. Again, this is compatible with traditional Chinese ideology that learning aims to cultivate inner character, which leads to the development of an idealized person—i.e., a person with self-constraint, a person who is able to control feelings and emotions, a person who can maintain harmonious relationships with others, and a person who pursues knowledge to the best of his or her ability (Tang, 1992). In accordance with what Klesse (1994) mentioned in his *The Third Curriculum II. Student Activities* that "in addition to the school's academic program, co-curricular activities function as mechanisms for attaining necessary goals of student development, such as self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and leadership." Third, *ke wai huo dong* is viewed as secondary to school learning and as supplementary to formal education. Although *ke wai huo dong* is considered important in the

students' well-rounded development, its position cannot be compared to that of formal learning in schools.

The evolvement of ke wai huo dong

Since its inception, *ke wai huo dong* has experienced ups and downs around its roles and the importance of its roles.

Starting in 1980s, the importance of *ke wai huo dong* was increasingly recognized along with the development of Chinese society. Notably, as an effort to raise awareness of the importance of *ke wai huo dong*, there arose a discussion of renaming *ke wai huo dong.* Chang (1983) suggested the term "co-curricular programs" (Chinese: 联课活动) to make *ke wai huo dong* on par with subject learning in school. As a response to this suggestion, Liang (1983) argued that though not very appropriate and accurate, the term *ke wai huo dong* has been in use for such a long time and it did not seem necessary to correct it.

Later, Yang (1990) also suggested other names for *ke wai huo dong,* i.e., semi-curricular activities (Chinese: 近似课程活动), extra-class activities (Chinese: 室外活动), group activities (Chinese: 团体活动) as well as students activities (Chinese: 学生活动). Some even suggested that *ke wai huo dong* should be included in the class timetable (Lian, 1994).

From the aforementioned attempts to rename or to correct the meaning of *ke wai huo dong,* one can see a tendency to establish a closer tie between *ke wai huo dong* and formal subject learning within official syllabus. However, there were scholars (e.g., Wong & Chow, 2002) who expressed the concern that such a tendency did not seem to help project the influence of *ke wai huo dong* into classroom learning nor help give more emphasis on the initiatives in learning, rather *ke wai huo dong* has become a subordinate to school criteria.

Following the above discussion to promote the position of *ke wai huo dong,* in the 1980s there appeared a tendency to marginalize the role of *ke wai huo dong* due to the ever growing intense examinations of all kinds school wide, provincially, and nationally. The results from examinations have become a major assessment tool used by the public and parents in their evaluation of school efficiency. In addition, to prevent a decline in students' academic performance, schools legitimately cut down the amount of *ke wai huo dong.* While in some other cases, *ke wai huo dong* was intentionally avoided by inexperienced teachers with the excuse of saving time for academic study.

Not surprisingly, this marginalization triggered a new tide of interest to revisit the importance of *ke wai huo dong* and again witnessed the attempts to formalize the role of *ke wai huo dong* and to place *ke wai huo dong* under a loosely defined school curriculum (e.g., Lian, 1993, 1995; Wong, 1994). In a sense, the connotation of *ke wai huo dong* has then been expanded into practical and experiential learning opportunities.

As a parallel, in mid-1980s in mainland China, another concept that also evolved around out of school time was "the second classroom" (Chinese: 第二课堂) (Wang & Chow, 2002). The second classroom, as the name suggests, differed from the classroom teaching and learning in that it was not strictly guided by the curricular, not carried out within the official school hours and not credited through exams. Yet "the second classroom" was regarded as an integral part of quality education (or competitive education) and its relation to classroom teaching and learning was reflected in that its content was developed on the basis of school curricular but not limited to the school curricular. The second classroom was seen to take on diverse forms and could be flexible because it was meant to encompass any teaching and learning opportunities within and outside the boundaries of schools. Proponents such as Yang and Yu (1987) pointed out that the

term “second classroom” differed from any earlier terms in that its core was directed to the expanding curriculum to time outside of regular school hours while at the same time remained its nature of being nonofficial-curriculum.

However, Wang and Wang (1999) refuted the use of the term “the second classroom.” They argued that such a term actually obscured the boundary between classroom teaching and learning with *ke wai huo dong,* as the latter should possess distinctive features with unique advantages. They further argued that if such a proposal about “the second classroom” can be deemed proper, then other areas of life should be labeled as “the third classroom,” “the fourth classroom” and so on. Therefore, such an attempt can only weaken the strength of both classroom teaching and learning and *ke wai huo dong.*

For or against, in practice the concept “the second classroom” has provided the theoretical base for the development of *Guidance for comprehensive practice and activities* (Chinese: 综合实践活动指导纲要) in a context of educational reform related to the trial period of a nine-year compulsory education system in the early 2000’s in Shanghai, China. The *Guidance* covers three major aspects of learning activities including research-oriented learning activities, community service and social practice, as well as labour work and vocational education (Wong & Chow, 2002). Such a policy is believed to shift away from what is believed to be embodied in *ke wai huo dong* in the traditional sense.

Along with these attempts to formalize *ke wai huo dong* as part of the curriculum, a notable phenomenon appeared around late 1990s that some of the universities began to take into consideration the non-academic credits in admitting new students. Such a practice certainly departs from the original intention of *ke wai huo dong* “carry no academic credit.” Counter opinions suggested that such practices only reflected the typical Chinese mentality to

overemphasize the importance of academic learning (Chinese: 唯有读书高) and sacrifice the flexible nature of *ke wai huo dong* (Wong & Chow, 2002).

In recent years beginning in 2000s, along with the awareness that education should go side by side with social advances, there emerged a view of non-formal curriculum (Chinese: 非正规课程) which gradually developed into the concept of *life-long learning*. Meanwhile, with an increase in the learning opportunities related to comprehensive application of library, museum and internet, the idea of informal curriculum (Chinese: 非正式课程) was proposed (Wong & Chow, 2002). This idea suggests that learning should go beyond the classroom and eventually realize *life-wide learning* (Chinese: 全方位学习). The concept of *life-wide learning* embodies a series of important ideas such as to foster students' multiple competencies, to embrace a broadened understanding of education, and to encompass learning within and outside classroom. The fundamental theory of life-wide learning emphasizes learning in the real practical environment. Some key words or phrases associated with this concept include "integrated; complete learning experience; transcending the limitation of subject course learning and examinations; multiple competencies; and experiential learning beyond the classroom," just to name a few. To be differentiated from *ke wai huo dong* in the traditional sense, the content of life-wide learning centres around eight major subject learning areas as required by school curriculum: Chinese language study, English language study, mathematics, science, technology study, individual studies, social studies, humanitarian studies, art, and physical science (Wong & Chow, 2002).

Among various responses around naming and interpretations of *ke wai huo dong,* as a more acceptable and clearer explanation, Tseng (2002) raised the point that *ke wai huo dong*

should be composed of both formal and informal elements. To be specific, Tseng made an effort to identify *ke wai huo dong* required in the subject area learning (e.g., lab activities, field trips for collecting research data), *ke wai huo dong* across subject areas, and *activity programs* of life-wide learning as the formal part of *ke wai huo dong.*

Some popular forms of ke wai huo dong in China

The popular forms of *ke wai huo dong* as well as its content reflect the societal influences of the time in China.

In Wang and Wang's (1999) version, *ke wai huo dong* mainly takes on three forms: group activities, interest clubs and self-directed activities. The group activities include: lectures and forums, for disseminating scientific knowledge, humanitarian and artistic knowledge, as well as ideological and moral knowledge; assemblies or gatherings (e.g., on special occasions such as traditional festivals, meetings with inspiring public figures of all kinds, concerts, memorial day); competitions and contests (e.g., sport games, contests in subject areas, tech exhibitions, in order to inspire feelings of collectivistic honour and pioneering spirit); visits, investigations and field trip (e.g., organized visit to the cemetery of revolutionary martyrs, visit to museums of all kinds, social investigations, interview of revolutionary heroes, field trip to famous places of sightseeing or key construction site) with the aim to nurture feelings and emotions, and to internalize positive values; involvement in activities to promote public good (e.g., to help seniors, to promote safety traffic, to help maintain public order, and to serve in the communities etc., with the aim to nurture the sense of responsibilities in students, to build up good work ethics, as well as to serve the public etc.; and wall newspaper which requires good cooperation and can be used to promote behaviors for public goods as well as to exhibit students' good work.

As another form of *ke wai huo dong*, interest clubs appear to be more flexible in content and aim due to more autonomy on the part of students themselves. This category includes subject-based various interest clubs which usually recruit members at approximately the same level of knowledge; technology clubs, which focus on practical technology (e.g., electrical technology club, meteorological technology club, chemical engineering club, carpenter club, farming technology club, etc.); and art clubs (e.g., music studio, dance group, band, play, and drawing club, etc.) with an obvious aim to foster aesthetic appreciation in students. The third form of *ke wai huo dong* is self-directed activities which refer to the activities carried out independently by students with some guidance occasionally from teachers or experts. This category includes reading activities, experiment activities, making models, composing etc. Such type of activities aims to cultivate students' initiatives and creativity as well as their ability of working independently. The three types of *ke wai huo dong* activities can work separately as well as in combinations. For example, reading activity is first seen as a self-directed activity but workshops based on book-reading or storytelling can also be organized into a group activity.

The website of Wang Xin, a popular Chinese website, also suggests a different way of categorizing *ke wai huo dong* activities, which include: stably structured and content-specified *ke wai huo dong* activities; group activities; and self-directed *ke wai huo dong* activities (Gong, 2007). This version does not have the strong political orientation featured in Wang and Wang's (1999) version and takes on more varieties in terms of the types of activities and their associated aims. For example, competitions are strategically used to select students of high caliber. As another example, one-on-one supervision can be made possible for self-directed research activities. Also, to facilitate *ke wai huo dong* activities, school can provide convenient access to labs, reading rooms and computer rooms etc.

Some phenomena associated with ke wai huo dong in China

In the following section, I review some phenomena that have drawn public attention, including the compression of children's free learning space, and offer snapshots about *ke wai huo dong* in contemporary Chinese people's daily lives.

• Compression of children's free learning space

In the early 1990s Chinese students were reported to attain the top places in many international mathematics competitions. The phenomenon attracted wide attention and brought reputation to the winners. As a result a trend grew—the originally low stake (carrying no academic credit) *ke wai huo dong* began to be transformed into something of a high stake (carrying academic credit). In other words, people began to use *ke wai huo dong* for utilitarian purposes. One good example was that if a student was a member of the national Olympic mathematics team, he or she then could receive automatic admission into a university. Another example was that many teachers would choose to use a greater portion of their time and energy to teach in fast growing weekend mathematics schools. Under such circumstances, students gradually have become opportunists themselves. The negative effects of this phenomenon have been so widely felt that eventually the government decided to ban these Olympic mathematics schools in 1995. It was reported in Taiwan the similar policies were used, which indeed turned research-oriented self-directed activities into a form of credit-earning examination.

To turn competitions and other *ke wai huo dong* activities (e.g., community services) into credit earning examinations has made *life-wide learning* a *life-wide examination* (Yimagudie, 1999, as cited in Wong & Chow, 2002). Though beneficial in some cases, such a consideration in the school admission policy was believed to be in fact a disguised demand to shape all students into one personality pattern (e.g., going to a concert is accepted as a decent *ke wai huo dong*

while watching a street play can be categorized as being vulgar and puerile) (Wang & Chow, 2002). As a result, the pursuit of all kinds of formal curriculum, non-formal curriculum, and informal curriculum to a great extent compress the space for students' own out-of-school arrangement.

It is worthy of mention that as early as 1959, Yang proposed the idea of anti-curriculum activities (Chinese: 防课活动). Further he mentioned the prefix anti- actually came from the term anti-virus, meaning to prevent and to counteract. Such an idea emphasizes preventing conventional, rigid, stiff, pedantic, out-of-date activities and programs from poisoning the living souls of children, which according to Wong and Chow (2002), are exactly the true meaning and spirit carried by *ke wai huo dong.*

Furthermore, Wong and Chow (2002) questioned the possibility to design and to formulate all the learning processes. They suggested a need to redefine curriculum, learning, teaching and learning, teachers' responsibilities, and teaching motto. In addition, they stressed that the spirit of learning was: learning should be happen anytime, anywhere and in any forms. It is important to leave some blanks for some free wills, or to allow some colours and some no-rule zones on the road to growth, which is exactly the domain where *ke wai huo dong* is working well.

• Snapshots about *ke wai huo dong* in contemporary Chinese people's daily lives

It is believed beneficial to encourage students' well-rounded development by incorporating *ke wai huo dong* in their lives. Yet the role of *ke wai huo dong* is elevated to such a level that it has become a standard on par with academic performance and it in fact has created a new starting line for Chinese children.

For example, it was reported that in 2011 (Yahoo news, 2013, April 8), 88 percent of surveyed families in Hong Kong were sending their children to at least one kind of *ke wai huo dong.* In another survey, 22 percent of elementary school students in Hong Kong have participated in up to seven *ke wai huo dong.* And 26 percent of surveyed families reported a monthly cost between six to eight thousand Hong Kong dollars (around one thousand Canadian dollars per month) on *ke wai huo dong*.

There has been an on-going trend to build an impressive portfolio highlighted by a variety of *ke wai huo dong* participations, competitions, and test-winning records. Headmasters in some famous secondary schools in mainland China also mentioned that among the applications 8 percent of applicants have passed the level-eight piano exam. More strikingly, some schools require students to at least master one kind of musical instrument such as cello, harp or some other unpopular ones, but not piano, which is considered to be too popular to be required (Yahoo news, 2013, April 8). Again this phenomenon has raised the question: has *ke wai huo dong* metamorphosed and lost its original meaning?

Some interpretations and forms of out-of-school time (OST) activity in contemporary North American context

Similar to *ke wai huo dong* in the Chinese context, the interpretations and forms of OST activity also vary in the North American context. OST activity in many sources in the literature also equally means after-school time (AST) activity or extracurricular activity. Out of school time may be also referred to non-school hours or the time outside of normal, traditional, regular, official, or typical scheduled school hours. Limited by space, I only chose to include in this paper two quite detailed and clear definitions of OST activity by organizations in U.S. (since I cannot find one good definition in the Canadian context; the readers should keep in mind that the

Canadian version can be somewhat different) and some currently quite popular forms of OST in North American context.

Definition by Nevada Afterschool Network (NAN)

Based on the definition provided by NAN, OST programs are programs that operate ten hours or more per week on an ongoing basis serving school-age (K-12) children, providing regularly scheduled, structured and supervised activities where learning opportunities take place outside the typical school day (NAN, 2014). OST programs may occur before or after school, on weekends, or during seasonal and track breaks. OST programs can provide multiple activities. To be specific, activities that OST programs deliver may include but are not limited to: academic support; educational enrichment; STEM (science, technology, engineering and math); cultural and social development; recreation; sports; fitness and wellness; visual and performing arts; tutoring and homework services; civic engagement; leadership skills; career exploration; service learning; college preparation; and development of the whole child.

In particular, NAN claims that OST programs do not include *single focused activities* such as religious education (e.g., CCD classes), music lessons (e.g., piano practice), sports practice (e.g., Little League), tutoring, or school-based clubs (e.g., debate team). NAN believes these single focused activities serve important purposes but should not be defined as OST programs.

About settings and providers, NAN defines that OST can take place in public facilities such as schools, libraries, parks and recreational centers or community centers, colleges and universities, as well as private facilities. Providers can be school districts, municipalities, and national not-for-profit organizations (e.g., 4H, The YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs), as well as local not-for-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, and for-profit agencies.

In NAN's definition, it also mentions staffing and funding. Direct-line OST staff can include site leaders/program coordinators, youth development workers, youth workers/leaders, instructor, teachers, college students, recreation leaders/specialist, teacher assistants, childcare worker, as well as student workers (high school students) and volunteers. They are part-time and/or seasonally hired. Sources of program funding may include: tuition fees; federal, state and local grants; donations from businesses, foundations, religious affiliations, individual donors; as well as non-monetary donations. Program funding differs across the state depending on the needs and demographics of the community being served. Programs may or may not charge a fee.

Definition by Michigan State Board of Education (2013 version)

Differing in focus and content from the definition provided by NAN, Michigan Out-of–School Time Standards of Quality (MOSTSQ) uses the term "out-of-school time (OST)" to fully describe before school, after school, times and days when there is no school due to teacher training, snow days, vacations and summer vacation. According to MOSTSQ comprehensive OST programs ideally include *both* Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) to support the school day and School-Age Care (SAC) to support working parents families. The implication is that comprehensive programs should be able to provide a safe place for students when their families are not around, plus academic support, enrichment activities, and child and youth development opportunities. Some *single-purpose programs* may serve children and youth who do not need comprehensive services. However, many of the same guidelines and safeguards should be accessible to children and youth at times when they are served by programs outside of typical school hours and when they are not accompanied by their families.

Extended Learning Time (ELT)

Over the last several decades, ELT has emerged as a promising policy option and has attracted greater interest in recent years in the U.S. educational context. On the one hand, ELT is used in a narrow sense to refer to the lengthening of a school day, a school week or a school year for all students in a given school with a focus on core academic learning and enrichment activities to enhance student success (Rocha, 2007). On the other hand, a broad sense of interpretation of ELT can refer to *any programmed time* that involves students, which include out of school time and extended school time that targets specific populations rather than the entire school. Blending both narrow and broad interpretation of the term, two main categories emerge: (a) programs that occur in extended school hours or days and use available school staff and facilities and; (b) out-of-school time (or after-school or summer school) programs that are operated separately from the regular school day or year (ECONorthwest, 2008).

Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs)

In some literature (e.g., Institute for Educational Leadership [IEL], 2013, n.d.), ELOs is found to be used as a term to refer to expanded student learning opportunities such as structured learning environments that can occur before, during, and after school, during the summer and/or by extending the school day, week and year. ELOs provide a range of enrichment and learning activities in various subjects including arts; civic engagement; and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). ELOs are part of a range of supports that can help youth succeed, along with positive influences from family, friends, school, and other enrichment activities. According to IEL (2013, n.d.), to meet the needs of students and their family, ELO strategies are a core component of community schools and seek to use the school as a vehicle for increasing learning opportunities for students. In essence, community schools are the

embodiment of what expanding learning time and opportunities should look like and they should align with their community partners to tailor their activities to the school's academic and non-academic goals.

Supplementary education: OST embodied with Chinese elements

The term "supplementary education" is used in some scholarship as another name for *ke wai huo dong* (e.g., in Zhou & Kim, 2006) but differ in connotation as well as extension when used in Chinese context and North American context.

Based on the study conducted by Zhou and Kim (2006), the growth of immigration in North America in the past several decades has witnessed a growing popularity of supplementary education. Particularly within Chinese and some other Asian immigrant communities (e.g., Korean community) the high value placed on education has spurred the development of a cottage industry of supplementary academic 'cram' schools for Asian American youth in order to meet the demand of immigrant parents. These schools include ethnic language schools and other ethnic systems of supplementary educational as well recreational institutions. In the literature, this phenomenon was interpreted by Zhou and Kim as a result of interaction between cultural factors (e.g., cultural heritage, a set of shared values, beliefs, behavioral patterns and coping strategies etc.) and structural factors (e.g., history of immigration, homeland conditions, pre-migration socioeconomic backgrounds, and modes of acculturation into host culture, etc.). According to Zhou et al. (2006), Chinese language schools have been widely known to be an integral part of ethnic social structure of the Chinese immigrant community in North America, with a goal to preserve language and cultural heritage in the second and succeeding generations.

Historically, it is recorded that prior to World War II the early Chinese schools in America were entirely separated from public schools. They provided education and vocational

training for children of Chinese immigrants, helped preserve cultural and language heritages and prepared Chinese young people for a career in Chinatown or back in China.

After several decades' growth, the present Chinese language schools have grown rapidly in scope and in numbers, and have evolved to have a much broader range of functions (Fong, 2003). These schools aim not only to maintain language and culture, but also to serve the educational needs of immigrant children. Activities these Chines language schools deliver can include language classes, enrichment, academic support, and cultural classes (i.e., SAT preparation for the Chinese subject test, math, fine arts, calligraphy, band, dancing, martial arts as well as some sport games such as badminton, table tennis, *weiqi* etc.). These schools operate mainly on weekends offering two hours of Chinese language classes plus enrichment electives, with a tuition varying from school to school. Some of these schools also offer tutoring classes in subject areas, such as math, English reading comprehension, English composition, and SAT subject test preparations.

The examples provided by Zhou et al. (2006) showed that in order to ease parents' anxiety related to after school time, some Chinese schools also open on weekday afternoons and on weekends. Of all kinds of Chinese ethnic institutions, the New York Chinese School run by the Chinatown Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) was said to be perhaps the largest child- and youth-oriented organization in any inner city Chinatown in North America (Zhou & Kim, 2006). The school enrolls students from pre-K-12, providing 137 Chinese language classes and over ten specialty classes, such as band, choir, piano, violin, cello, T'ai chi, ikebana, dancing, and Chinese painting. Running from 3:00pm to 6:30pm after regular school hours, the Chinese school set up one hour for students' homework and two hours for Chinese language

learning or other selected specialty classes. English classes are sometimes also provided for immigrant youth and adult immigrant workers (Zhou, 1997).

Meanwhile other forms of supplementary education also coexist with Chinese language schools. For example, there are private institutions that targeted at children's educational as well as recreational needs since 1980s. Among them, *buxiban* (Chinese: 补习班)—a Chinese version of afterschool tutoring classes, art schools/centers, music/dancing schools—is probably one of the most popular forms of private institutions. Students enrolled in these afterschool institutions are almost exclusively Chinese children from immigrant families of varied socioeconomic backgrounds (Zhou & Kim, 2006). It is suggested that the core curricular of these various ethnic institutions are meant to supplement, rather than compete with public school education (Zhou & Cai, 2002). One of the features of supplementary education that appeals to some immigrant parents is that by attending excellent language programs their children can earn high school foreign language credits from the formal education system or children can thus be well-prepared for the SAT language test.

However, despite the efforts on the part of immigrant Chinese parents and ethnic community, Zhou and Kim (2006) reported that in their interviews, many Chinese youth generally expressed dislike of the fact that they were made to attend these ethnic institutions by their parents. This somewhat explains the phenomenon that the children of Chinese immigrants tend to lose proficiency in their parental mother tongue when they grow older.

Although dissimilar with each other in terms of organizational form, governance, and curriculum, these ethnic institutions, nonprofit and for-profit alike, offer services to immigrant families that are directly relevant to children's formal public education. Very importantly, "these ethnic institutions not only offer academic and enrichment programs but also serve as the locus

of social support and control, network building, and social capital formation" (Zhou & Kim, 2006, p. 17).

Out-of-school time (OST) activities: benefits, issues and concerns

Participation in OST activities, such as sports, clubs, school-based and community based after-school programs is considered a new direction for youth development because it can benefit youth physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and academically (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005; Simpkins, Little, & Weiss, 2004), especially for low-income, minority, and at-risk youth with academic and social problems (Mahoney, 2000; Roeser & Peck, 2008). To reinforce the positive side of participation of OST activities and programs, the Harvard Family Research Project used empirical evidence in identifying a range of benefits associated with well-designed and well-run after-school and summer programs, including positive outcomes for academics, social/emotional health, risky behavior prevention, as well as health and wellness.

In the following section, I review more specific aspects of OST related discussions which include: types of OST activities and academic achievement, differences in OST arrangement, features of quality OST, participation and recruitment of OST, family awareness and their involvement in OST activities. In the concluding section, I also provide a brief review of free play, a concept that is interconnected with, yet differentiated from, OST activities.

Types of OST activities and academic achievement

To answer the question as to what OST activities benefit children more than others, studies show that there appears a clear hierarchy of academic benefits realized from some forms of OST activity involvement over others (Broh, 2002; Eccles & Barber, 1999; McNeal, 1995, as cited in Raleigh, 2008). Positive correlation has been found between academic achievement and

participation in music and athletics which stand out from among many activities (Broh, 2002; Eccles & Barber, 1999; McNeal, 1995). Eccles and Barber (1999) after examining different activities and the benefits and risks they bring to Michigan high school students, determined that participation in high school sports and performing arts were associated with positive academic trajectories. Broh (2002) used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study and analyzed the effects of participation across a range of extracurricular activities. Her conclusion was that the tenth and twelfth grade participation in interscholastic sports and school music groups were positively associated with improved senior year performance but other activities (such as vocational clubs and cheerleading) had either mixed results or no observable effects.

Raleigh (2008) has come up with a specific finding that children in her study who had music lessons between first and third grades scored more than six points higher on reading and five points higher on math than those who didn't have music lessons at all. In addition, those with ongoing participation in music scored higher than children who had only had music lessons at one time. She also found that there was a similar effect for ongoing participation in athletics on scores of reading and math between ongoing participation and occasional participation. Raleigh suggested future research further explore the relationship between music lessons, academic achievement and race, because music is the one cultural activity that has been consistently shown to be associated with high grade performance.

Differences in OST arrangement due to class, ethnicity and family socioeconomic factors

As far as social class is concerned, Lareau (2003) argued that social class is the deciding factor in determining cultural logics of childrearing. In her book *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*, Lareau (2011) again suggested some differences in parenting (or childrearing) between parents of middle or upper class and parents of working-class in the North American

context. In her observation, she concluded that in this historical moment, “regardless of racial or ethnic background, the middle-class parents tend to adopt a *cultural logic of childrearing* that stresses the concerted cultivation of children” (p. 3). A good example of this cultural logic of concerted cultivation which is considered an essential aspect of good parenting relates to engaging children in organized leisure activities that provide them with opportunities to interact with adults as coaches and mentors, the experience of being a member of a team, and lessons on how to structure their time,. In a word, “organized activities, established and controlled by fathers and mothers, dominate the lives of middle-class children” (p. 2). Yet this may not be the parenting focus of working-class or poor parents. On the other hand, Lareau called the logic of childrearing among working class and poor families “natural accomplishment of growth” (p. 4). This approach is said to be more spontaneous, focusing on providing children’s basic needs while allowing talents to develop naturally. These children’s lives take place near home with fewer structured activities, more interaction with siblings, and clearer boundaries between adults and children. According to Lareau, “although middle-class children miss out on kin relationship and leisure time, they appear to (at least potentially) gain important institutional advantages” (p. 4). Despite the fact that these observations were mainly focused on Black and White families in U.S., the findings proved to be insightful in examining situations across diverse cultural and ethnic communities.

Scholarship has also paid attention to the effect of family socioeconomic status (SES) on OST participation. For one example, many OST programs entail significant monetary costs for participating families such that poorer families may be unable to participate (Bouffard et al., 2008). Based on a report by HFRP (2007) on demographic difference in youth OST participation, it was found that across *virtually all OST contexts*, youth from higher income

families were more likely to participate than youth from lower income families. This held true for before and after school programs, other OST programs, and other OST activities. In another example, Zhou et al. (2006) noted in their study that access to the ethnic system of supplementary education was more restricted for working class families than for middle-class families in both Chinese and Korean immigrant communities in America, because that always requires material support. As Zhou et al. further explained, while ethnic-language schools and church-affiliated afterschool programs were affordable to most families of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, the academic and specialized enrichment programs embedded in these nonprofit institutions were more expensive. As a matter of fact, many high-quality private *buxibans*—Chinese version of tutoring classes—are extremely expensive.

Family SES has been found to correlate with summer learning loss as well. It is reported that, while all children tend to lose math skills over the summer, children from families of lower SES lose the equivalent of one month of reading instruction during the summer months, yet children from middle and upper SES families are able to maintain and often improve their reading skills (Cooper, 2003). This phenomenon is believed to be greatly attributed to the fact that students from SES advantaged families have greater access to summer learning and enrichment opportunities (i.e., access to books and encouragement to read, summer camps and classes, and cultural outings) than their less advantaged peers.

Moving from the focus on social class and family SES, clear race and ethnic differences in how children spend their time and their effects on participation in extracurricular activities are also evident in the studies (e.g., Cooper, 1990; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Larson, 2001). Having researched the one key aspect of OST—organized activities, Raleigh (2008) found clear differences by race and ethnicity in the participation of music and athletics that existed net of

social class. Hofferth and Sandberg (2001) analyzed data from parental time diaries of their children's activities and found that race and ethnicity were associated with activity involvement independent of social class. Their findings show that on average, Asian children spend more time on after-school educational activities while Black children spend more time in church activities and Hispanic children devote more time to family activities.

To echo Hofferth and Sandberg (2001), some other studies also report Asian students have demonstrated greater level of participation in music lessons and educational activities than White students. That high level of involvement, according to some scholars (e.g., Kao & Marta, 1995; Schneider & Lee, 1990), is motivated in part by cultural values. Schneider and Lee (1990) carried out a field study comparing the school and home environment of East Asian students and White middle school students. They suggested that music lessons might contribute to Asian children's educational success. Regarding the fact that Asian children are more likely to take music lessons than White children, Raleigh (2008) suggested this might be associated with immigrant parents' inclination for music lessons over organized athletics. Comparatively, Asian children are said to devote more hours of practice to their instruments each week. Insightful enough, Schneider and Lee (1990) came to the observation that the way that Asian parents help their children succeed academically was by carefully structuring children's OST activities in order to foster educational advancement. However, after examining the roles of arts and directed activities which are believed to have positive influences on children's educational performance, Lee and Kao's (2007) findings showed that second generation Black, Hispanic, and Asian children were particularly disadvantaged compared to native born White children regarding participation in directed activities.

Features of quality out-of-school time (OST) programs

What comprises a quality OST program is one of the key issues for OST researchers. The research findings vary from perspective to perspective. In the following section, I review three main views.

In the project sponsored by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the importance of evidence-based skill training approaches which are sequential, active, focused and explicit (SAFE) to skills development was clearly stated in the final report (Durlak & Weissbert, 2007). To be more specific, the two criteria in relation to process are the presence of a sequenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives (sequenced) and the use of active forms of learning (active). The two criteria in relation to content are the presence of at least one program component which is focused on developing personal or social skills (focus), and the targeting of specific personal or social skills (explicit). Durlak and Weissbert (2007) made a meta-analysis review of 73 programs and found that 60 percent of the program reports done after the year of 2000 showed that programs that used evidence-based skills training approaches were consistently successful in producing multiple benefits for youth which generally refer to three areas including: feelings and attitudes, indicators for behavioral adjustment, and in their school performance (or in some other cases, seven of the outcome categories: improved feelings of self-confidence, self-esteem, school bonding, positive social behaviors, school grades and achievement test scores, together with reduced problem behaviors and drug use), while those that did not use such approaches were not successful in any outcome area. Based on the above explication, to be successful in quality, programs must devote sufficient time to skill enhancement, be explicit about what they wish to achieve, use activities that are

coordinated and sequenced to achieve their purpose, and require active involvement on the part of participants (Durlak & Weissbert, 2007).

From another perspective, HFRP (2008) summarizes the findings from emerging researches on afterschool program quality and its relationship to outcomes. The summary indicates that, in addition to ensuring adequate physical and psychological safety and effective management practices, quality after school programs also share the following features: appropriate supervision and structure; well-prepared staff; intentional programming with opportunities for autonomy and choice; and strong partnerships among the various settings in which program participants spend their day—that is, schools, after school programs, and families. Also, Yohalem, Pittman, and Wilson-Ablstrom (2004) provided a view of quality OST programs, which should demonstrate consideration in three broad areas: youth opportunities, staff practices and supports, and administrative and management policies; as well, each of these areas constituent a group of specific quality features (Yohalem et al., 2004).

However, the self-evident importance of quality OST programs makes it particularly necessary to mention that some research also provided empirical evidence to show the poorly designed or run programs can do more harm than good. After all, it may not be realistic to think that all programs can achieve every positive youth development outcome (Yohalem, 2004). Likewise, some OST experts pointed out that: OST programs can make a difference, but the average program probably does not, and needs to be improved.

OST participation and recruitment

While quality out-of-school time (OST) or afterschool programs provide engaging learning activities in a safe and supportive environment, meet students' needs for personal attention from adults and inclusion in positive peer groups, and promote enjoyable experiential activities that

build self-esteem, children will not be able to benefit from OST or afterschool programs, however, if they do not attend them (Miller, 2003; Michigan State Board of Education, 2013).

Concerning OST participation, research has mainly focused on the three indicators of program participation— the breadth, intensity and duration of OST program participation. The breadth of OST program participation, referring to the number of activities youth participate within the same program, has begun to receive more attention in recent years. Baker and Witt (1996) examined differences in outcomes due to the breadth of OST program participation within a multi-component program. They found that elementary school children who participated in three or more different activities performed better in academic test than non-participants or youth who participated in only one or two activities. But their study did not answer the question as to where a line should be drawn between many activities and too many activities for children. On the issue of intensity and length of OST participation, there also exist differential effects of benefits. HFRP's (2008) reports which were based on many studies and research syntheses concluded that youth experience greater gains across a wide variety of outcomes if they participate in afterschool programs with greater frequency and in a more sustained manner. The reports further suggested that a number of ways can be used to achieve sustained participation, for example, by tailoring programs to youth interests, needs, and schedules, as well as by providing a wide variety of enriching opportunities for youth to be exposed to new ideas, new challenges, and new people. That aside, it is also acknowledged that in reality, youth's participation in OST programs and activities is likely to result from a complex set of factors including availability, parents and programs functioning as gatekeepers, and youth interests and needs. As another example, based on the data from a longitudinal nationally representative study of elementary school students and their families, Raleigh (2008) concluded that participation in

organized activities was positively related to academic achievement and that the academic benefits associated with it were the strongest among children with persistent participation.

However, the existing literature unfolds a rather problematic situation: although youth with the most developmental problems and youth in the least supportive contexts are believed to be most in need of OST opportunities and most likely to benefit from participation (e.g., Mahoney, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002), they are reported to be least likely to participate, especially in adolescence. Research indicates the existence of demographic differences in participation and a need to focus resources on the recruitment of minority youth in a variety of OST contexts (HFRP, 2007), with a need to particularly concentrate resources on serving underserved youth, such as ethnic minority youth (Borden, 2005). Therefore, it is believed to be a continuing challenge to practitioners and policymakers to assist in closing gaps in youth OST participation rates.

Besides using some good recruitment strategies, for example, reaching out directly to youth and their parents; mixing interesting, fun activities with relaxation time; linking an academic agenda to an engaging project; offering opportunities for leadership, community services, and paid employment etc. (for details, see Lauver, 2004), research increasingly shows that school- and community-based organizations offering OST activities should seriously consider offering scholarships and sliding scale fees in order to overcome any financial barriers posed to youths' participation. Policymakers could also consider requiring programs that receive public funding to guarantee a certain number of free slots to low-SES youths (Wimer et al., 2008). Also, OST and afterschool programs should be uniquely positioned to encourage a more supportive bridge between home and school (Michigan State Board of Education, 2013; Miller,

2003). In brief, “finding the right hook” (Lauver & Little, 2005) is undoubtedly essential to recruitment.

Parents’ awareness and involvement in OST

It is important to note in the most recent literature (Rosenberg, Harris & Wilkes, 2012) a shift from increasing afterschool program participation (*program-centered*) toward parents’ supporting children’s learning and development in afterschool settings (*learning-centered*), along with the fact that the topic of family engagement in OST programs has received significantly extensive attention and discussion.

Research suggests that parents’ psychological, financial, and social resources can influence parenting behaviors as well as youth outcomes (McLoyd, 1998). As such, stable, engaged, and supportive families headed by efficacious parents are more likely to be able to engage youths in constructive use of their non-school time (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Larson, Dworkin, & Gillman, 2001). For example, parents may use community-based activities as part of a compilation of strategies to support their children’s success (Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004; Weiss et al., 2003). A study conducted by Shubert Center for Child Studies (SCCS, 2007) also showed that children whose parents were involved in community volunteering action were more likely to participate in OST activities.

On a different page, although OST professionals realize the importance of family engagement, which can help bring all kinds of benefits I have described and they even have some strategies in place to make that happen (e.g., in Little, 2012), many studies report that involving families is no easy task. Youths from families with greater challenges or disadvantages (e.g., less engaged parents; fewer accessible OST resources; or low SES family background), may be less likely to involve in OST programs and activities (Wimer et al., 2008). Plus,

relatively socially isolated parents were found to be less aware of OST activities and they showed less trust in local organizations and groups than parents who are socially connected within their communities (HFRP, 2007). As an extension educator, Grant (2012) in her *Raising expectations for out-of-School Time* raised the question: Who is helping them (parents) make better decisions about out-of-school time activities? She made the note that parents often receive little communication about the program that their children are in and it is difficult for parents to get all things right in selecting a quality program in their first years of experience with OST activities.

Concerns about overscheduling of OST and the necessity of free play

The literature I have reviewed about OST so far stress the benefits associated with participating quality OST activities. Yet, it is also important to notice the voices from scholarship that target the overscheduling of children's down-time with lots of adult-organized activities. Children are said to be deprived of freedom to play at their own will.

Worries over the demise of play actually began surfacing as far back as 1961, but the idea became more popular a little over a decade ago (Wenner, 2009). Advocates of free play espoused the creative aspect of it, which differs free play from structured activities in that "games have a priori rules—set up in advance and followed. Play, on the other hand, does not have a priori rules, so it affords more creative responses" (Pellegrini, 2005, as citied in Stringfield, 2008, p. 4). According to Wenner (2009),

> free play is most similar to play seen in the animal kingdom, suggesting that it has important evolutionary roots… Animals and children do not play when they are undernourished or in stressful situations. Most essential, the activity should not have an

> obvious function in the context in which it is observed—meaning that it has, essentially, no clear goal. (p. 2)

Clearly, play must serve some functional, evolutionary benefit for the developing child. However, "the exact nature of the benefits of play has yet to be agreed upon and many explanations and theories currently abound" (Barnett, 1990). Generally, in the literature, physical, cognitive, social, as well as emotional benefits of free play have been repetitively mentioned. Studies show that children use more sophisticated language when playing with other children than playing with adults (Wenner, 2009). Other studies also suggest that play promotes neural development in "higher" brain areas involved in emotional reactions and social learning (Bratton, Ray, Rhine, & Jones, 2005; Wenner, 2009). Play builds emotional resilience that protects children from clinically significant depression and anxiety (Gray, 2014). In play, away from adults, children learn to solve their own problems and take control of their own lives (Gray, 2014; Kernan, 2007). Also, the risk component of play helps build on children's capacity to experience fear and overcome it (Almon, 2013).

However, multiple forces are interacting to effectively reduce many children's ability to reap the benefits of play (Ginsburg et al., 2006), such as a hurried life style, changes in family structure, and increased attention to academics and enrichment activities at the expense of recess or free play-centered play. The negative impacts brought about by the decline in children's freedom in play include an increase in all sorts of mental disorders in children and young adults (Gray, 2014; Bratton et al., 2005), a continuous decline in the sense of being in control of one's own life (Bratton et al., 2005), and a decline in children's social well-being.

To help children grow up to be socially competent, emotionally resilient, and happy, it is believed that children should be given lots of opportunities for free play. A balanced view offers

that, “as we strive to create the optimal developmental milieu for children, it remains imperative that play be included along with academic and social-enrichment opportunities and that safe environments be made available to all children” (Ginsburg et al., 2006, p. 188).

So far, I have reviewed relevant literature that offers us a holistic view of the context for understanding influences that shape parents’ mind. In the following chapter, my focus will be on the methodologies that guided me through my exploration and analysis.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPLICATIONS FOR METHODOLOGY

With a purpose to understand decisions made by immigrant parents in relation to out-of-school time (OST) arrangement for their children, I have explored scholarly literature in order to seek theoretical guidance for this study. As I understand, although the decision-making is the product of the working of human brain, it is more of a psychosocial process that involves influences from within the individual as well as from the outside world. For the sake of mapping out the factors that work in the picture and the relationship among them, a theoretical framework was then needed to serve such a purpose. At the onset, the clarification of three questions, which now might seem quite naïve, were useful in the quest and proved to be critical to my methodology for this entire study. First, issues around family situations and cultural life experiences of immigrants can be very complex. Then what issues or aspects of issues in which contexts should be given particular attention to? Second, when parents form decisions and perceptions toward out-of-school time (OST) activities, many agents or actors may voluntarily or involuntarily come into play. Then who should be the focus of this study, parents themselves or parents-children relations, friend circles, community or influence from an even broader arena? The last question, quite a daunting task to me, would be to work with people from diverse cultural background, even if they were from the same ethnic group and originally from the same country. Then how could I manage to have a considerable a priori knowledge about many traits thought to be characteristics of various groups?

These three questions to some extent served well as sensors before cracking open the light in the theoretical readings. It was in this process that I singled out the ecological theoretical

perspective despite the fact that the establishment of the theory can be traced back to the 1960s or even earlier (e.g., it was believed that prominent ecological models were based on analysis and integration of results from empirical investigations conducted by researchers from diverse disciplines decades ago, for example, starting in Berlin in 1870 on the effects of neighbourhood on the development of children's concepts (Schwabe & Bartholomai, 1870). With many as yet unexplained elements, the ecological paradigms are still evolving and emerging, so that such a theoretical perspective turns out to be one of the most dominant approaches in the contemporary study of family issues and child development. More importantly, it seemed to fit my need. Contributions to the theoretical perspective come from diverse disciplines, representing an integration of research and theory from developmental psychology and sociology, and experiential knowledge from social work, family support, early intervention, and early childhood education. One of the important usages of this perspective is that it helps structure various interacting influences in the process of human development in the real changing reality.

The relevance of this theoretical perspective to this study lies right in the fact that it looks into and attempts to explain the differences in individual's knowledge, development and competencies through the support, guidance, and structure of the immediate as well as distant contextual influences in the very society in which individuals live. This made it possible for me to integrally map out the position of parents' decisions relative to influences coming from family, past and present community and eventually broader societal and cultural environment. To this point, the usefulness of this theoretical perspective for the methodology of this research was clear—it threads the way as to how to conduct the research and what then need to be examined. To a great extent, this perspective properly meets the researcher's curiosity in looking for

answers in the ecological changes and experiential influences that shaped the evolving mind of immigrant parents.

In this study, three models—ecological systems approach, multidimensional framework, and cultural-ecological perspective—have conceptually more or less provided answers to my initial three methodological questions and meanwhile stimulated more methodological concerns that guided me in my research undertaking. Intentionally I have drawn from the three models the ideas and concepts that I felt were relevant and that would work for me. In the following sections, I discuss separately each of the models in terms of their applications, strength and limitation, if any, as well as their relevance to my methodology, though as a matter of fact I had to consider synthetically the three models in the actual conduct of my research.

Ecological systems model and its implications for methodology

The importance of understanding the individual in the context of the family as well as the context of culture has long been recognized since Urie Bronfenbrenner, one of the most important pioneers with a more complete view of contextualism, introduced in the 1970's the ecological paradigm in reaction to the restricted scope of most research then being conducted by developmental psychologists. In his book *Toward an experimental ecology of education* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), Bronfenbrenner conveyed such an often-quoted description of the state of developmental science at that time: "It can be said that much of developmental psychology is the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time" (p. 513). Bronfenbrenner (1977) also pointed out that emphasis on rigor by developmental psychologists leads them to design elegant experiments of limited scope and use. Obviously the concentration of conventional studies on parent-child relationship in the laboratory, home, or other settings has serious limitations (Bronfenbrenner 1974, 1977,

1979; Inkeles, 1966). “This limitation,” Bronfenbrenner explained, “derives from the fact that many of these experiments involve situations that are unfamiliar, artificial, and short-lived, and that call for unusual behaviors. That makes it difficult to generalize to other settings” (p. 515). In another book *The ecology of human development*, Bronfenbrenner (1979) further stated that, “seldom is attention paid to the person’s behavior in more than one setting or to the way in which relations between settings can affect what happens within them” (p. 18).

Looking into those symptoms manifested in the earlier conventional studies, Bronfenbrenner (1974) proposed to study the child in the “enduring environment in which he lives or might live if social policies and practices were altered” (p. 2). In 1979 he reinforced the view that to study a child’s development we must look not only at the child and his or her immediate environment, but also at his or her interaction with the larger environment. Bronfenbrenner postulated that an individual’s ecological environment is composed of a complex set of nested systems and the model he developed has hitherto been recognized as ecological systems model.

In the ecological systems model, Bronfenbrenner (1994) raised two major concepts: proximal process and five either embedded or interdependent systems, with some of the paradigms coming at different times.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), *proximal process* refers to the enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment,

> especially in the early phases, and to a great extent throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate environment. (p. 38)

Further, according to Bronfenbrenner, to be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis over extended periods of time. Examples can be found in parent-child and child-child activities, athletic activities and when performing complex tasks, etc. In terms of power, content, form, and direction, the effect of proximal processes on development vary systematically as a joint function of the characteristics of the developing person and of the environment in which the processes are taking place, and the nature of the developmental outcomes under consideration (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). It is to be noted that the proximal processes are posited as having greater impact in more advantaged and stable environments throughout the life course, while in poorer environments the impact is to be expected only for indices of developmental dysfunction, primarily during childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Another distinctive feature of ecological systems model is its highly differentiated reconceptualization of the environment as a set of systems from the perspective of the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Moving from innermost level to the outside, the systems are *Microsystems, Mesosystems, Exosystems and Macrosystems*. The final parameter is *Chronosystems*.

Microsystems are at the innermost of the nested systems structure. As Bronfenbrenner (1994) defined,

> a microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (p. 39)

The effect of proximal processes is closely related to the properties of microsystems. It is suggested in the literature (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1977, 1979; Inkeles, 1966) that most of the relevant studies concerning microsystems focused on the family, more studies in the field are needed to deal with key developmental settings other than just the family.

The mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person. It is a system of microsystems. Both Ogbu (1978, 1981, 1988b) and Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1985, 1986, 2000) emphasized that although the family is clearly most central to childhood achievement socialization and development, the way in which both the family as a group and as a collection of individual interact with other cultural groups and institutions will significantly influence human adaptation to, and development in, schools.

The exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate settings in which the developing person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Three exosystems having been suggested in the research since 1980s and recognized as especially likely to affect the development of children and youth indirectly through their influence on the family, the school and the peer group are the parents' workplace (e.g., Eckenrode & Gore, 1990), family social networks (e.g., Cochran, Larner, Riley, Gunnarsson, & Henderson, 1990), and neighbourhood-community contexts (e.g., Pence, 1988). As a classic example, Lynd and Lynd (1929) coined the phrase "the long arm of the job" to describe the considerable influence that fathers' employment situations had on their families, including parents' childrearing activities.

The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture or subculture, with

> particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40)

Contextualists such as Szapocznik and Krutines (1993) especially emphasized the study of family embedded within cultural context because "culture is important as it represents a constantly changing context that helps understand and explain human behavior" (p. 402). People are affected by the very culture in which they grow up. What is especially important for methodological relevance is that

> this formulation points to the necessity of going beyond the simple labels of class and culture to identify more specific social and psychological features at the macrosystem level that ultimately affect the particular conditions and processes occurring in the microsystems. (Brofenbrenner, 1994, p. 40)

In addition to the aforementioned four systems parameters, chronosystems is another parameter dealing with the property of time. A chronosystem encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives, for example, changes in socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in everyday life (Brofenbrenner, 1994).

As a most recent extension of the ecological systems model is the bioecological dimension, which brings to the picture the interaction of genetics and environment. The implication is that

> many human beings may possess genetic potentials for development significantly beyond those that that they are presently manifesting, and such unrealized potentials might be actualized through social policies and programs that enhance exposure to proximal processes in environmental settings providing the stability and resources that enable such processes to be maximally effective. (p. 41)

Since its inception the ecological systems approach has brought about great changes and improvement in the work of developmental psychology and family-related studies as it helps overcome what applied psychology has fallen short: the study of individuals or families by focusing on individuals or the families alone. An early good illustration was suggested by Inkeles (1966) that the study of child rearing should be broadened to include the interests of society and its influences on the child-rearing process. The concepts suggested by the ecological systems model have inspired the application to work with families within larger social contexts. This includes the work of Auerswald (1968, 1971), Aponte (1974), Belsky (1980, 1984), Gable, Belsky, & Crnic (1992), Boyd-Franklin (1989), and McGoldrick, Pearce, and Giordano (1982), just to name a few.

From a researcher's perspective, I have paid special attention to the version of interpretation offered by Auerswald, which helps clarify bit of my methodological confusions. According to Auerswald (1968), the term "ecological systems approach" was used metaphorically to describe a way of thinking and an operational style… and not a description of a well-formed theoretical framework. In the field of family therapy the ecological system approach was compared with the traditionally espoused "interdisciplinary approach" which did not seem to work well with family problems (Szapocznik & Krutines, 1993). It was believed that although the interdisciplinary approach maintain the vantage point of each contributor within his

own discipline, its limits are obvious. While it has expanded the boundaries of the theoretical framework of each discipline to include concepts borrowed from other disciplines, only those concepts which pose no serious challenge or language difficulties are welcomed. Auerswald (1968) further argued that it is fatal that

> the interfaces between the conceptual frameworks of different disciplines are ignored, and as a result, the interfaces between the various arenas of systematic life operation (e.g., biological, psychological, social or individual, family, community) represented by different disciplines are also ignored. (p. 202)

In the meantime

> the structural aspects of the clarity of context of the data collected are lost as a result. The precise source, pathway and integrating functions of messages passing between various operational life arenas in the ecological field cannot be clearly identified. (p. 202)

The limit was that the analysis of such data depends almost entirely on the content of these messages, and much distortion can and does take place.

Ecological systems approach has proved to be theoretically superior than the interdisciplinary approach in the way that

> it changes the vantage point of the data collector, it focus precisely on the interfaces and communication processes taking place there, and it begins with an analysis of the structure of the field, using the common structural and operational properties of systems as criteria for identifying the systems and sub-systems within it. And by tracing the communications within and between systems, it insists that the structure, sources, pathways, repository sites and integrative functions of messages become clear in addition to their content. (Auerswald, 1968, pp. 202-203)

The implications for methodology first and foremost are that ecological systems approach sets the scope for the study. It provided a way of broadening the field of inquiry first before narrowing the field by looking into the problem "in depth" (Auersward, 1971). In the meantime it allowed a way of mapping the structure of a holistic picture of the systems that work together in the evolving mind of immigrant parents in the study. To expand from such an approach, I made the assumption that parents' perceptions of OST programs and their decisions henceforth could also be more thoroughly understood by conceptualizing the influences in their lives (i.e., immigration, changes in socioeconomic conditions, neighbourhood relations etc.) as specific micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, or chronosystems and examine their interdependent relationships.

While it made it possible for me to have a clearer view of the ecological contexts or in other words, a structure of contextual influences that needed to be explored, it was also important for me to keep in mind that systems could be complex and the degree of their influence could vary. For instance, assessment of the microsystems such as the community ecology (Trickett, 2009) would have to extend from the examination of current communities (depending on many categorizing factors, such as age, religion, education etc.) the families were interacting with to the examination of communities the families used to connect with in their home county, which have played as well as have been playing roles in people's lives. The influence of communities certainly weighs differently. Another example of the methodological implications for my study perhaps was better versed in questions raised by Bubolz & Sontag (1993): how are family decisions influenced by other systems, and how do these decisions affect the quality of life and the quality of the environment?

Also, the approach allowed for much more clarity in the contextual contributions to the analysis, which was exemplified in the fact that I could well develop the steps in data collection

and in the subsequent procedures of research undertaking. The steps for this study involved: searching for relevant contextual influences in the immigrant parents' lives based on their life trajectory; conceptualizing those influences in terms of systems in an ecological framework; mapping out or structuring those influences; as well as collecting data and ordering of that data within a selected framework which somewhat reiterated the necessity of mapping the structure of systems and their relationship.

A question then arose, which concerned with which contexts within the multiple contexts I should stress most in order to understand better the immigrant parents' perceptions and decisions. To answer question, I have gained insights from both Bronfenbrenner (1994), whose systems models prescribed the kind of environment, activities and patterns to look at, and Ogbu (1981) who suggested in studying the ecological contexts, we do not deal with the total physical environment, rather, only those aspects of it which directly affect subsistence quest should be dealt with, which is how a certain population deal with the "demands of their physical, social, political, economic, and supernatural environments, that is, the demands of their cultural tasks" (p. 419). Further, the mention of cultural tasks or culturally defined tasks has made culture in which one was brought up and is belonging to a unique context to look at. Concerning the cultural context, Szapocznik and Kurtines (1993) have indicated that it was not possible to fully explain the nature of the family changes that were taking place by viewing families strictly within the context of their culture of origin. Szapocznik and Krutines found that it necessary to extend the conventional approach to the study of families in a way that more truly represents the cultural reality in which it is embedded—a multicultural context in my study. Based on these views, I believed the changing individuals could be understood better by examining a context of changing world reality. And the contexts to be researched are not just the historical or idealized

aspects of culture, which is static in a sense, and not just the culture of people's origin, but the cultural context as it occurs, which is an increasingly multicultural and pluralistic context (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993).

It is also important to make a special attention to the changes along the time path, for example, the change in family structure, the change in socioeconomic status, as well as the change in employment etc. as suggested by the chronosystem. This somewhat legitimated one of my research purposes of looking at the past experiences of immigrant parents, including their past experiences with OST programs, yet also paying sufficient attention to their current situations. Along with all these benefits the ecological systems approach has brought to my research, an additional benefit is that I could effectively avoid "societal stereotypes" that was seen as the main problem of many early theory and design of research on family and educational development (Slaughter-Defoe, Nakagawa, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990).

Interview/focus group discussion questions derived from this concept were:

1. Can you describe your life in the community in China in terms of facilities, people relationships, schools and employment opportunities?
2. What work did you do before you came to Canada? How would you comment on the changes of employment in Canada, if applicable?
3. How do you feel about your life in China, in terms of socioeconomic status?

But then I felt that this approach by itself could not fully solve the methodological problems of this study; at least it did not directly address the critical issues I needed to examine. This is to be supplemented by other models in the following discussion.

Cultural-ecological model and its implications for methodology

The cultural-ecological perspective essentially theorizes "a comprehensive look at how environment influences patterns of behavior" (Foster, 2004, p. 376). It was considered an attempt to develop an appropriate model for cross-cultural research in child rearing and development, as opposed to the limitations then characterized by some theories and researches in the field of family studies.

Commenting on the research on the family and its contribution to achievement in ethnic minority children, Slaughter-Defoe et al. (1990) pointed out the fact that little differentiation is made among ethnic minority groups of different cultural, language, immigration, and economic backgrounds. Just to take the Asian minority group for example, there are many types of Asian-Canadian families. Tweed and Lehman (2002) once used the term "culturally Chinese" to reference culturally Chinese individuals of any ethnic group (e.g., Hong Kong Chinese, mainland Chinese, Vietnam Chinese, to name a few), but then they further stated that

> we treat cultural group membership as a simple either-or dichotomy, but by no means does this deny the reality of underlying continuities of cultural difference. Any framework that describes cultural differences inevitably must oversimplify in some ways the rich cultural interplay. (Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 89)

In supporting the notion of Tweed and Lehman, other scholars (e.g., Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000) also raised the important point that bicultural people have more than one cultural lens available.

Clinical professor Falicov (1993) commented on the limits of the view of universalists who stress the similarities and commonalities in the universal human processes and have little use for contextual variables, such as race, gender, or ethnicity. Falicov stated that the universalist

position (in family therapy) lacks the perception that what a particular school of thought considers universal, and tacitly normative, may be "'local' knowledge or beliefs based on the cultural forms developed or 'invented' by specific subgroups of the U.S. professional middle class" (Falicov, 1993, p. 374). In addition, it is acknowledged that the differences between and within ethnic minority groups, for example, Asian-American groups should be given a closer examination. Yet based on the review of Slaughter-Defoe et al. (1990), there existed gaps in the existing literature, for example,

> the focus has been solely on culture as defined in reference to values, beliefs, and attitudes; socioeconomic status has been examined in only one or two studies (e.g., Yao, 1985), family structure has been neglected, and neighbourhood and community factors have generally not been examined. (p. 375)

Ogbu (1981), from another angle had explicitly pointed to the inadequacy of the universal model for cross-cultural research as ethno-centralism, which, rather than being truly universal, is merely pseudo-universal rooted in the beliefs of an ethnocentric population. In the study of human competence, Ogbu blasted the absurdity in using universal model of "searching for a pattern of child rearing and development derived from studying one group (e.g., White middle-class children) in another group (e.g., minority children)" (p. 413). Meanwhile, the universal model is inadequate in explaining the origins of human competence by focusing only on the interfamilial or micro-aspect of human development. It decontextualizes competencies from realities of life. On the contrary Ogbu observed that a general theory of child rearing and development should emerge from data derived from mapping out patterns of child rearing and development of different groups (e.g., minorities, majority, social classes, etc.) or societies (Gearing, 1976, p. 188; Ogbu, 1981) in their respective contexts.

In response to the need for new directions, Ogbu (1981) has proposed the "cultural ecological model (CE model)." According to Ogbu,

> The underlying assumptions of this model, as opposed to the universal model is that origins of human competencies—general and specific skills—lie in the nature of culturally defined adult tasks, such as the subsistence tasks of a given population. (p. 417)

Ogbu also believed most children in the population grow up as competent men and women. Besides, he observed minority groups maintaining a kind of symbiotic relationship with a dominant group in a specific environment tend to evolve alternative rather than merely different instrumental competencies that are characteristic of a spatially distant and non-symbiotic culture.

According to Ogbu, a definition of cultural ecology (the version by Bennett, 1969) that he finds useful is:

> the study of how the way a population uses its natural environmental influences and is influenced by its social organization and cultural values and how the relationship between the personal attributes and behaviors of its members and their environment is to be found in the strategies or tasks they have devised for coping with their environmental demands, in the ways of exploiting available resources to attain their subsistence goals and solve recurrent and new problem. (Ogbu, 1981, p. 421)

Ogbu (1981) elaborated,

> one environmental demand which has a powerful influence on human competence and is faced by all human groups is subsistence… the model I propose deals primarily with the role of subsistence tasks and strategies. (pp. 421-422)

What I felt especially relevant to my study was that Ogbu's observation that

> while all human population respond to subsistence demands, they do not all respond alike or with the same set of strategies because they do not occupy the same environment, because their environments do not contain the same resources, and because they have different histories of resource exploitation or of quest for protection. Different populations, therefore, seem to have evolved different strategies more or less appropriate for their given circumstances…a given population has usually invested such instrumental competencies with cultural values, and stressed them for the upbringing of its children. (Ogbu, 1981, p. 422).

So far, Ogbu (1981) has brought up in the development of his CE model several important conceptions that I can use and want to explain here because of their relative importance in data analysis in my study. The first concept is "subsistence," also understood as making a living , is "one environmental demand which has a powerful influence on human competence and is faced by all human groups" (p. 421). Subsistence is of particular significance in modern industrial societies for "it has become intimately tied to man's quest for status enhancement or self-esteem" (p. 421). Besides, subsistence strategies (i.e., work, job) largely determine how children are prepared for adult life in the home, community, and school. A quite often asserted notion is that "the nature of one's participation in this economy determines not only one's subsistence status but also his or her general status enhancement or self-esteem" (p. 421). As a matter of fact, it is also the major concern of CE model to study the influence of the nature of one's participation in that economy on his personal attributes. The second concept is "competence" about which the definition comes in multiple versions. Common to most definitions, however, is the notion that "competence is the ability to perform a culturally specified task" (p. 414). The "ability" is, in many cases, referred to "a set of functional and

instrumental skills which makes it possible to perform the given task" (Connolly & Bruner, 1974).

Concerning the limitation of the CE model, however, Bronfenbrenner (1985) has argued cogently that there are limits to this approach. For example, the limits suggested by Elder's (1974) research on the effects of economic hardship:

> Elder's report of the long-range effect of economic hardship… especially among families that were poor to start with, is difficult to reconcile with Ogbu's assertion that most children in given population grow up as confident adult men and women. (Bronfenbrenner, 1985, p. 67)

At least in some ecologies, Bronfenbrenner (1985) claimed,

> neither the adults nor the peer group can fully succeed in producing a next generation that effectively adapts to the realities that it confronts. In such situations, human beings, both the adults and the children, are simply doing the best they can under the circumstances. (p. 68)

The limitation works in certain ecology and needed to be given special attention in my study. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's notion of "adaptive to the realities" and "simply doing the best under circumstances," should be clarified through a closer look at the actual practice of immigrant parents and their general beliefs in facing the challenges in the realities. Families in my study might have experienced tremendous changes in many aspects of their lives— their socioeconomic status for one example—before and after their migration. I have hypothesized that there is the possibility that impact of migration may increase or decrease the confidence of producing competitive and adaptive children. This will be considered in the stage of data analysis.

That much said about the strength and limits of the CE model, in the following I want to shed some more light on its implications for my research methodology.

It is commonly acknowledged that making use of quality OST programs can be seen as an effective future oriented strategy for child development. But I assumed that before attending to examine how parents perceive and use OST programs for whatever childrearing purposes, an understanding of the root reasons and primitive motives for parents to hold whatever views and take whatever actions toward OST activities needed to be completed. Thus what kind of "subsistence skills" should be looked at that really matter to immigrant parents who might be concerned about making use of OST programs as means to achieve their goals of children's development? According to Ogbu (1981),

> a given population develops its child-rearing practices over a period of time as a set of standardized techniques designed to ensure both that its children survive into adulthood and that they acquire the competencies essential for their adult cultural tasks. This development is based on the people's experiences as a group in dealing with the demands of their physical, social, political, economic, and supernatural environments, that is, the demands of their cultural tasks. (p. 423)

To understand the kind of strategies used in childrearing and actions taken by immigrant parents, based on Ogbu's (1981) cultural-ecological perspective, it was important to look at parents' life expectations of their children and "cultural tasks" in Ogbu's terminology (pertaining to subsidence, social organization and relations, political organizations, and so on) that parents are adapting their childrearing techniques to inculcate in their children. Inevitably, what cultural and ecological supports are available for parents' sustaining coping strategies and how parents

define “competence or cultural tasks,” “benefit” as well as “success” differently was then an important focus of my exploration.

To take into consideration the demands of the physical, social, political, and supernatural environment that immigrant families in my study were facing, one competence, I can give an example here, recognized as essential and needs further examination through this research was, bicultural skills which refers to the greater competence that parents and youngsters need to develop in managing their cultural differences within the family and successfully functioning in a cultural pluralistic milieu (Szapocznik & Krutines, 1993). The perspective also helps clarify the aspects of experiences of immigrant parents that need exploration. For example, what were the demands on students in their school days? What are the changes in conceiving the function of OST programs after moving into Canada?

The cultural ecological perspective also renders help in data analysis. Based on Ogbu’s (1981) view,

> the transmission of standardized knowledge and skills of child rearing and their rationale ensures that parents and other adults in the population will share more or less the same ideas of what children must learn and be—what instrumental competencies they must possess—in order to become competent adults, it also ensures that adults share similar ideas of the techniques and skills with which to help children acquire these functional competencies. (p. 419)

Thus it was also very necessary for me to figure out if parents share somewhat the same ideas of what children must learn and be by comparing parents’ views within and across cultures. It is also necessary for the future research to compare parents’ and the program designers’ understanding of the “cultural tasks” and “adaptive and functional competencies” since Ogbu

(1981) assumed that parents and other child-rearing agents are not really independent actors in child-rearing tasks. Such an assumption led to the need for more balanced perspectives and an emphasis on cultural diversity to avoid stereotypes. Individual differences should also be stressed.

Some basic concepts of this model were especially helpful in framing my study. For illustration sake, I here give two examples. The first concept is “effective environment.” Cultural ecology does not deal with the total physical environment. It deals only with those aspects of it that directly affect subsistence quest and protection from threats to physical survival. Major elements of the effective environment include the population’s level of technology and knowledge and nature of available resources (see Ogbu, 1981). Knowledge includes people’s understanding of the nature of their environment and the necessary techniques for exploiting its resources (Netting, 1968). The model posits that a people’s effective environment largely shapes their subsistence strategies or modes of resource exploitation.

Interview/focus group discussion questions derived from this concept were:

4. How much do you feel you are familiar with the chances and resources around you in terms of assisting you in childrearing?
5. What do you realize the resources of OST programs are available to you in the environment?
6. How do you figure out the useful resources of OST programs?

The second concept is “adaptive adult categories” or what are usually called “adult role model” (Ogbu, 1981). According to the native theory of success, in every population there usually exists a folk theory of how one performs cultural tasks in order to succeed in the status system. A native theory of success includes knowledge of the range of available cultural tasks or

status positions, and the competencies essential for attainment or performance, the strategies for attaining the positions or obtaining the cultural tasks, and the expected penalties and rewards for failures and successes (LeVine, 1967; Ogbu, 1981).

Interview/focus group discussion questions derived from this concept were:

1. What do you expect your child to become through education and other means (e.g., the use of OST programs) of inculcating values and cultivating their potentials?
2. Can you give me an example of what you believe is a successful child in your original society and in the Canadian society?
3. What do you think are the important competencies children should be achieving in this society and in that society you used to connect with?
4. How do you feel are the ways to achieve the tasks required?

A comprehensive consideration of ecological systems model and cultural ecological model

Each of the two models I discussed above, namely the ecological systems model and cultural ecological model made distinct contributions to the design and methodology of this study but there were also times that I needed to take into consideration both so they could work together to help me to produce more insights and guiding questions. Given the differences in different layers of contextual systems that influenced the individual, the way of communicating between and within systems as well as the content to be communicated regarding essential cultural tasks, for example, could diverge. To understand everything better, I needed to devise questions to address the differences and find ways to analyze the data. For instance, these questions were considered:

1. Who and what around you may influence you when you make decisions about whether or not to enroll your children in what OST programs? (The question is raised so for the purpose of figuring out the structure of contextual systems.)

2. Did people in your culture of origin pay any importance to the out of school means for cultivating essential competencies in children? If yes, in what way? You may give me some examples.
3. What are the competencies you consider as essential for success in your culture of origin?
4. What are the competencies you consider as essential for success in Canadian culture?
5. Through what ways do you learn the differences or similarities in two cultures?
6. What do you know about the ways these two cultures cultivate essential competencies in children through school systems and out of school endeavors?
7. What OST programs you feel more important than others and why?
8. What impact may occur now and in the future due to the differences in ways of cultivation?
9. In what respects do you think the cultures should communicate or learn from each other so as to make childrearing not too confusing?

Data derived from these questions also helped solve one interesting question whether immigrant parents involved in the study are more attached or less attached to their homeland traditions while living amongst contextual influences of a different kind? The answer to the question could be used to predict the ways parents perceive and use OST programs.

Multidimensional comparative model and its implications for methodology

One persisting methodological question of this study was, can and should I understand all cultures completely, however possible, in order to tell the nuances in the interpretation of cultural variables? This concern arose because of the comparison method I planned to use throughout the analysis in this study, between the researcher and the participants as well as within the

participating group of people. This method was necessary for this study as it helped me to find themes concerning key issues such as how people define “cultural tasks” and “necessary competence” and how this perception relates to the decisions on OST program participation; the literature also suggested that it may not be always proper to make comparisons due to many factors such as people with diverge socioeconomic background maybe hard to compare. Also, is it necessary to compare everything as long as people can name it?

The above thought of mine formed a reasonable backdrop for the search of an appropriate method and the multidimensional comparative model originally devised for the training of clinical professionals and suggested by Falicov (1993) has provided an option. The model allows for working with diversity without having to become experts on specific ethnic groups. Such a model emerged in response to the new demands in clinical evaluation that universalist, particularist, ethnic-focused approaches failed to cope with. According to Falicov, the assumption of such an approach is that

> in a multicultural society, each person is raised in a number of cultural subgroups and draws selectively from the groups’ relative influence… and cultural similarities and differences are the result of inclusion in or exclusion from various groups… In addition, racial classifications that separate persons into clearly defined races are increasingly being questioned (Wright, 1994, July 24; Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, & Wyatt, 1993). (Falicov, 1995, p. 376)

Two important concepts in this model need some explanation. The first one is “ecological niche.” The idea of ecological niche reflects the multiple contexts and the borderlands that result from the overlapping of contexts and it also indicates the partial cultural locations due to the

reality of multiple identities and subjectivities “that won’t fit easily into the master narrative of a monolithic culture” (Giroux, 1992, p. 34). To put it simply, the combination of multiple contexts and partial cultural locations can be thought of as each family’s ecological niche. The usefulness of this concept lies in that it captures simultaneous interfaces of contexts. According to Falicov (1995), this ecological niche shares cultural borderlands with the locations of families from other cultures in various degrees, and gives the family a positional relationship relative to the dominant cultural values.

It is to be noted that the multidimensional comparative approach does not deny the value of having information about discrete contextual variables (ethnicity, social class, race, religion), “but it really does not support starting by learning the special characteristics of separate and distinct groups. The philosophy behind it supports inclusiveness and a diversified unity” (Falicov, 1993).

In line with the concept of ecological niche, another concept I employed is “generic parameters” (Falicov, 1995, p. 378). One important assumption of this comparative framework is that some types of cultural information are more important for family therapy work than are others and events that happened in the world are interconnected and history is inclusive, which changed lives in every ethnic group but was also changed by all those groups. So the use of generic parameters can avoid the potential divisiveness that may result from studying groups separately and emphasizing differences only. The generic parameters are “the same for all families, the specific contents can be used to compare styles, solutions, resources, and constraints across ethnic groups, social classes, religion, and so on” (Falicov, 1995, p. 377). And “a comparative framework focuses on key parameters that are thought to transcend particular

models of family therapy, and then it examines these parameters with a cultural lens, generating a form of comparative maps" (p. 378).

One thing that I think needs more explanation is that for the purpose of this study, multidimensional comparative approach was favoured more than the ethnic-focused approach which has been enormously influential in developing a sensitivity to cultural differences and helpful in work with specific ethnic populations (McGoldrick et al., 1982). The ethnic-focused approach, as its name suggests, stresses "ethnicity" as the primary factor for explaining family diversity. This position requires considerable a priori knowledge about many traits thought to be characteristic of various groups (Falicov, 1995). Some limitations are associated with this approach. For example, Falicov (1995) pointed to the tendency to oversystematize and stereotype the notion of shared meanings by assuming that ethnocultural groups are more homogeneous and stable than they actually are. In reality, we know that many ethnic traits are in flux due to within-group and outside-group influences. Besides, Falicov further explained another limitation of ethnic-focused view,

> the approach holds the assumption that the observer, the person making the social description, is completely objective and has no effect on the conclusions about the group being observed" (p. 375).

Thus, the observer is put in a neutral position who describes distant cultures. Indeed, culture, in this study, was not an independent or separate factor that influence the perception and decisions of immigrant families; rather it was one of the factors (other factors such as education, social class, religion, stage of acculturation, and so forth) that worked together in shaping the perceptions and decisions of immigrant families.

A multidimensional position goes beyond the one-dimensional definition of culture as ethnicity and aims at a more comprehensive definition of culture that encompasses other contextual variables. In his previous articles, Falicov (1983, 1988) has offered a laundry list of dimensions that should be considered in a definition of culture: those sets of shared world views, meanings and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership and participation in a multiplicity of contexts, such as rural, urban or suburban setting; language, age, gender, cohort, family configuration, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, employment, education, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology; migration and stage of acculturation, among others.

I can come to the understanding that the different combinations of "simultaneous membership" and "participation in a multiple contexts" can produce many subgroups for the purpose of cross-cultural comparison while it is likely that it will be difficult to make generalizations. Yet this consideration of multidimensional definition of culture did have implications for the methodology of this study. Most importantly it forged a cultural way of thinking.

As a researcher, I gained insights in coping with a seemingly impossible task. The multidimensional comparative approach presents events as they have happened, as interconnected and inclusive. Instead of treating each group separately, a comparative approach weaves elements of all the groups' histories into a discussion of particular topics. The topic may be economic depression, immigration, or social prejudice (Falicov, 1995). Such topics are set as parameters for comparison across ethnic groups. Comparisons of similarities and differences in conceptions, experiences, or values are made within each parameter across social classes, ethnic or religious groups, gender etc.

Based on the understanding of the multidimensional comparative approach, two questions then arise: how can the researcher decide on the parameters for comparison? And what could be the topics?

According to Falicov (1995), the parameters that matter vary, depending on the researcher's understanding of key concepts essential for the conception of the changing family, elements of the study and even his or her own cultural background. Specific to this study, the parameters I decided on helped in thinking systematically about families. For illustration sake, these parameters wwere considered for the purpose of devising interview questions and data collection as well as data analysis.

1. Ecological context: diversity in where and how the family lived and how it fit in its environment. For example, the interactions between the family and the communities to which the family belonged (racial, ethnic, religious, rural-urban); between the family's living and work conditions; and between the family and institutions, such as schools, social agencies, and so forth.
2. Experiences associated with immigration and acculturation: the change of living locations and induced impacts on life beliefs, aspirations, socioeconomic status etc. In determining the similarities and differences due to migration, ethnic-focused comparisons can be included.
3. Child-rearing beliefs and practices: practices and beliefs associated with managing available opportunities for the purpose of child-rearing across cultures.
4. Ideas in relation to competence and strategies: the views, values and beliefs associated with defining competence and subsequent strategies to achieve the competence, including OST opportunities.

The integration of cultural ecological perspective was helpful in that the addition of a cultural lens expanded the usual categories and added a critical perspective about existing theories, beliefs, and practices in multidimensional comparative approach.

Summary

Ecology is the word that says all things are connected. Human ecological theory is probably one of the earliest theories of the family and yet, it also contains many new and evolving elements that help establish an important position in the current research world such as applied science, anthropology, environmental engineering, and economy and so forth. It draws attention to how the natural and human created environments affect our behavior, and how individuals and families in turn, influence these environments (Netindustries, 2014). In human ecology, the person and the environment are viewed as being interconnected in an active process of mutual influence and change. Human ecology theory is a way of looking at the interactions of humans with their environments and considering this relationship as a system. It provides a way of making sense of events that have happened in the past, and then allow for predictions about what may happen in the future. These environments may be the natural world, reality as constructed by humans, and/or the social and cultural milieu in which the organism exists. The implications of considering the impact of contextual variables in early childhood development for social services, including OST programs designed especially for immigrant children or not, are also getting clear. Zigler, Taussig, and Black (1992) have documented the fact that interventions that target the social context in which families are embedded during the early childhood years have an impact on delinquent behavior 10 to 15 years later.

In this study, the researcher gained methodological support from three ecological models: the ecological systems model, the cultural ecological model, and the multidimensional

comparative model. They each contributed in different manner and from a different angle and most importantly they wove together to not only supplement and modify each other but also to set boundaries for each other. This, for example, is reflected in the fact that the researcher has decided on the four parameters for comparison based on the supporting views derived from multidimensional comparative model while also taking into consideration what is considered the philosophical base of the cultural ecological model (e.g., theories around the subsistence tasks) and such a decision has turned the researcher to refocus on the more relevant aspects in the contexts to be studied initially confined by the ecological systems model.

The ecological systems approach is predominant in the past and current literatures concerning OST activities and child development. It has been operating at a relatively macro level and in theory it has helped in directing the researchers' attention to a broader picture at the onset of their pursuit, instead of focusing solely on individuals and micro- aspects of families. Specific to this study, it helped map out the contextual systems to be studied. If this research as a whole can be viewed as a unified product, the ecological systems approach has set a boundary for the farthest limit this study can go. This ensured that the research would not become too huge to handle. In other words, it provided direction as to where and what to explore in terms of external influences, concrete and abstract, which worked in shaping people's lives in terms of their attitudes, values, beliefs, decisions. Meanwhile, the external data to be sought should be also in line with the demands derived from the cultural ecological perspective and multidimensional comparative approach.

The cultural ecological perspective, on the other hand, prescribed the content of the data required. It allowed me to explore deep inside the core or connotation of the research, for example, why immigrant parents favour some strategies or programs or activities over others.

The core concepts suggested by this approach, for example, “subsistence skills” required for successful adulthood in a certain culture served as the backbones around which flesh and blood were built. Such an approach has in logic and in content built connection with the research topic of this study. It brought the purpose of this study to a level that could directly touch the most basic and yet the most fundamental as well as important aspects of life as a living world. I once doubted if it was necessary to delve this deeply. Then I realized this was actually the advantage conferred by the ecological theory and only in this way could I, the researcher explore and understand fully. Meanwhile, the way to define some of the core concepts intertwines with the consideration of certain contexts. The meaning of the concepts can only be derived from the meaningful context with which they are interacting. This calls for the cooperation of ecological systems perspective and cultural ecological approach.

The multidimensional comparative approach provided theoretical support in choosing the proper parameters for this study. It prescribed the way to extract and weave elements common to those groups into particular topics of discussion. To great extent, it provides means to categorize, organize and screen data. Besides, this model provided a chance for the unity of object and subject, which means, the parameters were not only used to understand the cultural maps the families bring, but also to make me, the researcher, to be aware of the cultural map I could bring. In a way, I, as the researcher, was no longer a neutral observer; my values and experiences were woven into descriptions of the big picture with other people’s experiences. This really freed my mind as to where to fit in in this research project. Yet of course, to fully realize this function, it had to work together with ecological systems perspective and cultural ecological approach. The greatest contribution of this model was that it solves a seemingly impossible task, so I was not overwhelmed by the tremendous task of getting to know each culture to its every detail. Instead,

the work was initiated by figuring out the useful parameters for studying groups across the cultures.

Based on the ecological perspective, I devised a research method that allows me to broaden my inquiry before narrowing down to focus on in-depth problem. The broadened scope and vision enabled me to grasp a holistic picture while digging into the issues beneath the surface. In addition, the comprehensive use of the three ecological models provided me an effective way to develop interview questions, structure the thoughts, as well as categorize and analyze data.

That much said about the three models which provide useful ideas for the methodology of this research, they also provided methodological implications for future research on family studies and immigrant studies in terms of scope, perspectives, and the use of data.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHOD

This study aimed to examine, from an ecological perspective, the decisions of immigrant parents regarding their children's participation in out of school programs. As the researcher has decided to utilize a qualitative methodology from the outset of this study, the main emphasis of research method has been given to a qualitative orientation in generating data and analyzing. The scope and depth of data collection was largely depending on the ecological systems model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1985, 1986) and cultural ecological model (Ogbu, 1978, 1981, 1988). They together provided the researcher a clue as to what data among the infinite variety of available natural data should be considered important in this study. I developed parameters for interview questions and data analysis across diverse cultural background on the basis of a multidimensional comparative model (Falicov, 1993), taking into consideration the above mentioned two ecological perspectives.

Data collection

A small-scale qualitative and exploratory project, this study was carried out in a university-affiliated community in a city in western Canada. Ethics approval was obtained from university ethics committee before any specific steps of research were taken. Extensive literature review and key informant in-depth interviews with families were employed as the main strategies to construct context as well as produce data. Other sources of data also include casual dialogues with the respondents on occasions when it seemed not proper to use the tape recorder. Also, information from media such as newspaper and government websites was also taken into consideration.

Participants

In order to identify participants suitable for the study, criteria were set in advance: the involving family was to have at least one pre-school age child at the beginning of the study, a critical stage for child identity development according to Erikson (1963, 1968); and the participants themselves should have experienced some kind of out of school activities in their childhood. Concerning advertising and recruiting, the researcher employed two means, namely the recruitment notices were posted on the community news board, and the recruitment script was used to phone potential participants to ask for their willingness to participate in the study. It then turned out that all the respondents were residents of the same community. During an initial talk with the respondents, brief introduction and objectives of the study were given. Written consent was obtained and participants were also informed that they could choose to stop participating at any time.

Coincidentally, these families were all first-generation immigrants from mainland China who settled in a medium sized city in western Canada. Parents all had higher education, which as a matter of fact is largely attributable to the immigrant selection policy of Canada. This factor will not offset the value of the findings the study aims to arrive at, but rather, it has been argued that better educated people in a given culture are more able to give consistent responses on cognitive tasks concerning the normality of cultural experiences (Boster, 1985; Weller, 1984). Meanwhile, most of the families included in the study were generally at the same stage of their family life cycle: they are first time parents with pre-school children. Yet the cultural background of the families varied greatly due to the vast geographical as well as historical configuration of China.

In the study, a total of 12 Chinese families were involved. Interestingly, only one father agreed to be interviewed. This is not surprising, though, since very often in Chinese tradition, taking care of small children is in the mother's sphere of responsibility. At the time of the first interview, the age of the respondents ranged from 31 to 42 years (with a mean of 36 years). The length of marriage ranged from 6-17 years. The number of children in the families also varied from 1 to 3 with 3 out of 12 families had only one child at the first interview. Most parents had a high level of education, with a minimum of 15 years. They immigrated to Canada between 2001 and 2005. Their mean residence period in Canada was 7 years.

The researcher has to admit that in this study the term "Chinese parents" was used not strictly, in the sense that all parents interviewed were Chinese-born, yet they could not be representative of all parents from mainland China, since Chinese parents, like Western parents, come in all varieties.

Procedure

With each family, the researcher conducted two formal around one-and-half-hour interviews, and Chinese was the language for most part of the interviews at parents' choice, although occasionally respondents used a mixture of English and Chinese for the purpose of clarification or description. The interviews were semi-structured and happened in mutually agreed places (such as the community lounge room or the researcher's office) at mutually agreed time. All interviews, including the initial interviews and the follow-up interviews, were conducted by the researcher personally over a two-year period from June 2010 to July 2012. The interviews were both tape-recorded and written down in the form of key points jotted during interviews, with participants' consent. The taped interview data were transcribed afterwards. To observe what was stipulated in the protocol of the ethics review, the identity of each respondent was coded

(e.g., pseudonyms were used where necessary) in all written documents as well as in this thesis to ensure anonymity. This was explained to respondents at the outset of each interview.

The form of interviews employed by the researcher in this study ranged from formal questionnaire-based interviews, to totally open-ended interviews that would begin with a single prompt (Seale, 2004, p. 181), such as, “tell me something about yourself.” Such form of interview was qualitative in nature and allowed participants more room for in-depth thoughts as well as the chance for clarification if necessary. They are distinguished from survey-based interviews in that the latter tend to rely more on closed questions which follow a structured format in the form of a questionnaire, and are designed to elicit specific information or “facts” from the interview subjects (Seale, 2004). There were also times when the respondents could not determine the purpose of the questions. In such cases, the researcher sometimes narrowed down the question by providing more specific descriptive words. For example, about the open question “can you tell me something about your family in which you grew up?” the researcher might also add, “you can talk bit about the financial situations of your family, or your parents’ parenting, or anything you feel might have had an impact in your childhood.” As a matter of fact, the researcher felt comfortable with qualitative interview style also in that she could modify the way of questioning by changing the wording or the depth of the questions, taking into consideration the respondents’ personal inclination as well as the context. Based on given open questions and closed questions, participants were also encouraged to expand their thinking on topics of their interests.

In addition to formal interviews, the researcher also benefited from conversational form of informal interviews conducted in casual settings. And information and opinions shared in such settings were also noted down in the form of key points afterwards. Besides, before doing

interviews, I had already reflected in writing on my own thoughts around children's development and potential meaning of participating out of school programs. Such thoughts were also taken as part of the data, as they provided a base for comparison between my experiences and that of the participants involved, an insight for analyzing data as well as a warrant to avoid splitting of subject and object.

Development of interview questions

Based on my understanding of Falicov's (1995) multidimensional comparative way of thinking, development of the content of interview questions should rely on the researcher's understanding of the key concepts essential for the conception of the changing family environment, elements of the study, and his or her own cultural background. As well, interview questions were developed in such a way that they could reflect the contextual components around the topic the researcher has attempted to explore, their organization and their influence on parents' decision making as well. Generally, for this study, interview questions were grouped under these four topics, including: ecological context, experiences associated with immigration and acculturation, child-rearing practices and beliefs, and ideas in relation to competence and strategies.

Ecological context

In this part, a total of seven interview questions were given. Questions around this category mainly focused on family background (or in other words, micro-system variables, such as parents' education, family structure, parents' marital status and socioeconomic status, etc.), community factors (the diversity of where and how the family lives and how well it fits in its environment, such as the interaction between the family and the communities in terms of racial, ethnic, religious, rural-urban). The data were used to build up the family's socio-demographic background information, a necessary condition to elicit understanding about the micro as well as

macro context around families. In collecting data of this genre the researcher has also taken into consideration James Coleman's theories (1988) about human capital, financial capital as well as social capital, particularly ones relevant to the family in the examination of the effects of various factors on achievement in school. And this consideration would be reflected in collecting background information about parents' education, their childhood experiences associated with family and community, and the changes in family's financial situation. A few examples of questions of this genre are given here for illustration: Can you tell me something about yourself, in terms your age, religion, education, personal interests, job… etc.? How would you describe the community that you lived in and that you are living in, in terms of people, relationships, facilities, schools… etc.?

Experiences associated with immigration and acculturation

A total of nine interview questions were given in this part. As immigration is one of the leading reasons for most dramatic changes in life for many immigrants, the examination of the experiences associated with immigration and acculturation made it possible to explore the so-called mutable nature of parental ideas (Miguel, Valentim, & Carugati, 2010). This part has offered a chance to incorporate macro social changes and influences in the process of immigration and acculturation into the personal world of people. It was also one of the researcher's purposes to reflect on how such experiences shaped and reshaped the beliefs and attitudes as well as actual practices in terms of childrearing and parents' making decisions around out-of-school program participation. Questions of this genre included, for example: What did you expect to see concerning your child's life and education before immigration? How do you describe the changes in your life that have been bringing about by immigrating to Canada?

Child-rearing practices and beliefs

In this part, a total of seven interview questions were given. The purposes of these questions were to look into parents' "everyday psychology" (Moscovici, 1981) associated with child rearing, such as parents' life expectations for their children, by comparing the childrearing beliefs and practices in their culture of origin and in the culture of the host country, and by reflecting on the broader social values in the larger society. To a great extent, Ogbu's (1981) cultural-ecological model of child rearing (p. 422) helped in framing the questions. For example, questions of this genre included: What do you expect your child to learn and be? What are the changes of your expectations before and after immigration? If you can think of any, can you describe a successful person, a child or an adult?

Ideas in relation to competence and strategies

Thirteen questions were given in this part. The main purposes of this genre of questions were exploring parents' values and beliefs associated with defining competence and learning their awareness and use of available resources around them—effective environment—in Ogbu's words, to achieve the competence of their children. Examples of questions included: How did you figure out the useful resources of out-of-school programs? What are the resources that you used or will use to help in childrearing?

It is important to note that the content and context of these questions, and what they were intended to elicit from interviews, would also be taken into account in the analysis of the interview material.

Data analysis

Before coding and analyzing the data, the researcher has engaged in reviewing the entire transcription of data multiple times, jotting down notes and memos on the margin of the

transcript, paying special attention to some outstanding statements for further screening or analyzing, as well as stances that might be negative instances which might contradict literature or societal stereotypes, and trying to group and regroup the thoughts based on explicit or implicit categories. The purposes of these activities were to see, according to Seale, how data relate to social theory, organizational accounts, or common-sense expectations, and to see whether inconsistencies appear between different people's beliefs in the setting or between people's beliefs and their actions (Seale, 2004, p. 235).

While not surprisingly the coding depended greatly on the ecological perspectives that structured and guided this study, the four parameters used to group the interview questions were seen as the initial categories for coding. Meanwhile, the researcher was also employing the time-centered strategy in the coding of data. To be specific, since the interview questions were probing into life before immigration and life after immigration, the analysis then also followed this thread. The generative power of compartmentalized research strategy, i.e., life in the past and life in the present, definitely helped the researcher in organizing the data and making sense of the differences as well as changes associated with individual, families, and surrounding environments. In general, data analysis began with the formulation and clarification of research problems, and was supported by the manner in which the data collection procedure was organized.

Analysis of data in this study involved a constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that the constant comparison is a method in which an item of data that is coded as a particular category is examined and its similarities with and differences from other items in the category are noted (Seale, 2004, p. 235). This method, through its systematic sifting and comparison, comes to reveal and establish the mutual

relationships and internal structure of categories. Concerning this study, two levels of comparisons were given. On one level, family life with a focus on the views held by the individuals concerning child-rearing before and after immigration were compared. On another level, the comparison was reflected in the researcher's attempts in discovering whether there existed and the degree of congruence in the respondents' interpretations about the same question. As comparisons were constantly used in analysis, this allowed the researcher to reflect on people's lives before and after immigration, and make connections with their present lives. More importantly, the integration of the respondents' experiences in the past and at present seemed more meaningful in understanding and identifying some culturally bound reasons for parents' choices. Impressions of the overall themes thus also became clearer to the researcher.

CHAPTER 5: DATA AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I have initially jackknifed my data results derived from interviews with 12 Chinese immigrant families into four chunks based on the four parameters I used for data collection in my research method. Yet the constant overlap and crossing in the content of the data across four parameters made me reconsider the grouping of ideas by using different coding strategy. Undoubtedly, inner connections and overlap of ideas still exist, which is not out of my expectation, but the regrouping has made the logic clearer. As a result, I now present this chapter under four topics, namely, background information, practices and beliefs associated with childrearing, experiences associated with immigration and adjustment of life in Canada, and experiences associated with children's participation in OST activities. Each topic also contains subgroups. Background information covers the data derived from the questions looking into socio-demographics and respondents' childhood experiences with family, neighbourhood, community as well as general learning environment. The part of practices and beliefs associated with childrearing provides a window into respondents' childrearing beliefs as well as their self-reported practices across two cultures. Concerning the experiences associated with immigration and adjustment of life in Canada, experiences and ideas overtly relate to immigration are recorded. And in the last part, experiences associated with children's participation in OST activities, I have infused data gained from questions related to competence and strategies with some of the data gained from childrearing practices and beliefs.

It is important to note here that because the data collection of my study has lasted around two years (2010-2012). I began my process of collecting data when children were still very young at preschool age. At the time I put all data together for thesis writing, changes in many

dimensions of life have occurred in terms of children's life (e.g., they already moved on to grade two or three). For that reason, my observation does not stay at children's program participation at just one point of time; rather, I have given enough attention to the changes related to children's participation in programs (e.g., whether they quit the program or still remain in the program; the length of their stay in the programs; and the different types of programs they have taken). In addition the change in some of parents' views and practices are also noted down when necessary. But again my primary focus is on children's participation in OST activities and relevant parents' perceptional shifts. There is another thing I want to mention: of all parents agreed to be interviewed, there was only one father. This is interesting but not surprising, since in Chinese tradition, mothers are usually considered the main role in the sphere of child rearing. The fact reminds me of possible differences in perspectives due to the factor of gender.

Background information

Background information includes results and interpretation about family socio-demographics and parents' childhood experiences. As I mentioned earlier, changes in dimensions of life due to the time range of this study, such as family structure and families' SES status were also noted down and recorded in the diagrams.

Socio-demographic results

To obtain information about families' socio-demographics, I raised questions about family demographics and changes, personal information, personal interests and hobbies, and socio-economic status and changes. Data results gained from the first interview as well as in the follow-up interview were recorded in Table 1 to Table 11.

Table 1 Family demographics at the first interview

Items	Family demographics
Family level:	
Family composition in Canada	All the families in the study have both parents present. Besides, eight families have grandparents stay with them. Three families have only one child (with an age range from 5 and 6), eight families have two children with an age range of 2 to 5, and one family has three children with an age range from 1 to 8
Birthplace of preschool age children	three children were born in China; the rest of the children all born in Canada
Length of residence in Canada	4 to 9 years
Years to immigrate	between 2001 to 2006
Personal level:	
Principal applicant for immigration	Three mothers (Eva, Yani and Cathy) were principal applicant for immigration and the rest of the families with fathers as the principal applicants.
Respondents' age range	fathers' age ranges from 30 to 41; mothers' age ranges from 29 to 41
Years of marriage	6 to 17 years
Religion	only one parent attending Christian church regularly

Source: Data from the first interview

Table 1 shows that all the families in the study are intact families. All the families are first generation immigrants. And most of the families except for one family are generally at the same stage of their family life cycle: they are first time parents with pre-school children. These facts provide a good ground for later comparison among families. The one thing that also needs mentioning is that at the time of my first interview, eight families also had grandparents living in the same house with the preschool children. This fact provides a premise for Laura's comments related to the importance of family living together later on.

Table 1 also shows that 3 children were born in China; the rest of the children all born in Canada. When asked "how you feel about their children's English language competency," some parents like Selina and Ying revealed that they themselves could not speak very good English, so

at home they might not be able to help much. Despite of that, parents all reported that they did not worry too much about their children's English because children were very young and as long as they were given the chance and emerged in the language environment, language should not be a problem for them.

From Table 1, we can see that the time period of these parents immigrating to Canada falls within 1998-to-2007 range, in which period the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) is reported to top the list of sending countries. According to Canadian International Council, between 1998 and 2007, new immigrants from PRC to Canada averaged 33,443 annually: most immigrants came to Canada with a university degree. The rise in the number of university educated immigrants can be explained by Canada's rising demand for skilled immigrants and China's increased supply of university graduates (Li, 2010). Notably, three mothers are principal applicants for immigration and the rest of the families with fathers as principal applicants, which reflects the fact that Chinese women are also on the way of becoming well educated and competent in life.

About parents' religious belief, only one parent reported attending church regularly. Three mothers also expressed their tendency to believe there is an unseen force ruling this world. And some parents showed understanding of religious faith. Take Selina for example, she said,

> I am an atheist, due to my education in my whole life. But I feel spiritual faith is necessary for human beings. Probably this can do some good for the operation of the society and can bring peace to individual persons. Although it is unknown to us whether there exists a supernatural force, I feel with some kind of moral restraining power, the society can come to be more stable and peaceful. Beside, after all, human cognition is far from reaching the understanding of what the universe avails to us. (Selina)

But none of the parents think they truly belong to any religious group. To take into consideration the fact, I decide religion should not be a significant factor in comparing the participating parents' point of views regarding their beliefs and practices of childrearing. All respondents were reported being married before they came to Canada. As age and marriage are two items that are considered sensitive to respondents, I here only put down the estimated range.

Table 2 Family demographic change at the follow-up interview

Items	Change in family demographics
Family structure in Canada:	All the families in the study have both parents present. Besides, all 12 families have grandparents stay with them.
No. of children in the family and age range:	2 families have one child (with an age range from 7 and 8), 8 families have two children with an age range of 4 to 7, and 2 families have 3 children with an age range from 2 to 10

Source: Data from the follow-up interview

Table 2 shows that at the follow-up interview all 12 families had grandparents stay with them. Based on the responses from respondents, this may be due to three reasons. First, some respondents suggested as grandparents were aging, personally and psychologically they would have the need to stay with their children and grandchildren for more time. Second, in Yulian's case, her father passed away several years ago, so she believed she had to take on the responsibility to look after the aged mother. And the third reason is: families immigrating to Canada encountered many challenges as the result of organizational and institutional change, the presence of grandparents greatly helped ease the burden of parents with small children.

Table 3 Education and profession background of respondents and their spouses in China

Code of respondents	Educational attainment in China	Profession in China	Spouses' education and profession in China
Wendong	Doctorate	engineer	Baccalaureate/medical doctor
Yulian	Baccalaureate	architect	Doctorate/Engineer
Rantel	Baccalaureate	pharmacist	Doctorate/Engineer
Yona	Master	medical doctor	Master/Business man
Selina	Baccalaureate	administrator	Master/Engineer
Eva	Master	pharmacist	Doctorate/Engineer
Rachael	Baccalaureate	architect	Master/Engineer
Yani	Master	assistant professor in a university	Master/Government employee
Laura	Baccalaureate	working in a national travel agency	Doctorate/Engineer
Tina	Master	engineer	Baccalaureate/Sales person
Ying	Baccalaureate	engineer	Baccalaureate/Engineer
Cathy	Master	engineer	Master/Engineer

Source: Data from the first interview

From the data shown in Table 3, we can tell that all the parents participating in this study attained university degrees or post-secondary education. And according to any criteria, they are among the highly educated. We can also see that when they were in China, all the parents worked as professionals. Such educational and experience background support the fact that

parents in this study all came to Canada under the “independent class” who have to meet the points required by the Canadian immigration policy.

Although spouses do not have to have a strong educational and professional background to score entry points, in general, their educational attainment is quite impressive. As I have mentioned earlier in the review of literature, the skill-based immigration system, which many countries adopt, generates an influx of well-educated Chinese immigrants. And none of respondents and their spouses worked in the fields such as entertainment, sports and politics. This feature is also bound to support the categories of skills-based jobs generated in the Canadian labour market during the period.

Table 4 Family situation upon arrival in Canada

Education and work:
Fathers: Eight fathers were students either in the university or in the college; two fathers had jobs in their own professional field; and two fathers just started a small business of their own.
Mothers: five mothers were students in the university; one homemaker; one mother was an administrator in a university residence office; seven mothers worked either full time or part time, but none of them worked in their professional field they used to be in.
Family income and living:
All families belonged to low-income family and all families rent their places of living

Source: Data from the first interview

Table 4 shows that after arriving in Canada, it seems common for most of the families in this study to follow such a pattern: one parent would go for further “Canadian recognized

education" in the university or colleges, and another parent would seek employment for temporary alleviation of financial strains imposed on the family. The jobs ranges from entry level labour work to office work such as administrators as the most common. Such a job location accords with the observation made by Man (1995)—the requirement of "Canadian experience" and the lack of an accreditation system to calibrate their qualifications make it difficult for parents to obtain employment that is commensurate with their qualifications. As English language competency can be one of the contributing reasons, I asked respondents to assess their own English language proficiency. As a result, two thirds of the participants reported they did not speak English well at first but were gradually able to understand and communicate without too much difficulty. Besides, most of the participants said they had more difficulty in listening comprehension and writing. The explanation can be attributed to the fact that back in China chances to practice speaking English were not many although English learning started as early as in elementary school in China twenty years ago. In addition, English was given sufficient attention mostly at time of exams and promotions. Three out of ten mothers including two English majors reported they did not consider English as the major barrier to their employment.

All the Chinese immigrant families invariably confronted economic hardship in the first years of their settlement in Canada. Some spouses found themselves dependent on their partners economically for the first time in their lives. Thankful to their jobs back in China, family savings helped in many ways. About life changes in the family economic situation, I have given more details in a separate space in the section of experiences associated with immigration and its impacts.

Table 5 SES of respondents' families at follow-up interview

Education received in Canada:	Fathers five fathers received PhD degree; three fathers received Master degree	Mothers two mothers received PhD; four mothers received Master degree
Profession:	Fathers Seven fathers work in their own professional field (including two fathers holding the management position); and two fathers still work on their own business; one fathers work and at the same time study in the university; also two fathers had casual employment now and then, and they are now staying at home.	Mothers Two mothers study in the university; three mothers are working as office administrators. one mother is working on the exam to become a medical doctor; one mother is working as a cost analyst; one mother is working as a pharmacist; two mothers are engineers; two mothers (one was trained to be an architect but working as a draftsman, another was trained to be a mechanical engineer but working as an entry level technician) lost their jobs and now stay at home. Besides, two mothers are holding management positions.
Family income:	Only one family still belonged to low-income category.	
Living conditions:	All but one family bought their own condos or houses.	

Source: Data from the follow-up interview

Table 5 shows the change in families' socioeconomic status. As an explanation to this change, there is a possible association between educational attainment and socioeconomic status change. But this does not necessarily prove the theory that higher education leads to better employment or better pay, rather, it proves that "Canadian recognized education" increases the chance for successful employment. My interview data also shows that two fathers failed to seek full employment in the professional field. The reported reasons were that they probably did not have adequate English language skills although one of them even completed a Master degree in the Canadian university. Concerning the buying power of the families, other factors also involve.

For example, six families reported that they sold their apartments in China in order to meet the down payment for the houses in Canada.

Table 6 Respondents' personal interests and hobbies

Code of respondents	Personal interests and hobbies	
	Past	Present
Wendong	Interested in varieties of things	Sports; taking kids for outdoor activities
Yulian	Reading, sometimes writing and day dreaming	Taking kids to try all kinds of things; cooking; hiking
Rantel	Sports and outdoor activities, but with a chronically ailing mother she could hardly go anywhere	Travelling and like to participate in some adults connection activities
Yona	Reading, and learning	Always encourage kids to try new things
Selina	Love freedom most; Reading; Drawing; Travelling; Sports	Traveling and fishing with kids; but not too much time exploring her own interests
Eva	No particular interest other than singing, sometimes reading	Reading books about early childhood education
Rachael	Used to be interested in many things	Have no money and time to pursue personal interests
Yani	Reading and staying at home	About the same; taking kid to some fun place like Disney land
Laura	Reading classics; outdoor play	Reading about early childhood education; taking kids for various activities; dancing
Tina	Science experiments; some sports	Like to play sports with kids; try new techs
Ying	Sports; also like to try new things; making new friends	Travel with the family; reading
Cathy	Drawing; any outdoor sport	Still like drawing and seems to pass down this interest to the kid

Source: Data from the first interview

From Table 6, we can see most of the parents used to have variety of personal interests and hobbies. Although only Rachael directly mentioned that after immigrating to Canada, she "have no money and time to pursue personal interests," this might or might not be the case with

the rest of the parents. But children obviously have occupied much of the time and energy of their parents, which was reflected in the fact that around 9 respondents reported doing things together with children in answering my questions about their present interests and hobbies. Plus, Eva's present interests and hobbies are "reading books about early childhood education." Cathy also said she "seems to pass down this interest to the kid," which I assume might also be the case with some other parents.

Respondents' childhood experiences

In the following, I used the title Respondents' childhood experiences to group the data results and relative interpretation regarding respondents' family background and the community environment they used to live in China. Please see Table 7 and Table 8.

Table 7 Family background of respondents

Code of respondents	Respondents' parents education	Respondents' parents profession
Wendong	Father received high school education; mother received junior high school education.	Father was an army man; mother was a worker.
Yulian	Both parents received university education	Father was an engineer; mother was high school teacher.
Laura	According to Laura, "they did not receive any formal education."	Both parents were farmers.
Cathy	Both parents received university education.	Both parents were engineers.
Rachael	Both parents received university education.	Father was a senior architect; mother was a high school teacher.
Yani	Both parents received university education.	Father was government officer; mother was an elementary school teacher.
Selina	Father received university education; mother received high school education..	Father was an officer in the army; mother was a worker.
Yona	Both parents received elementary education.	Both parents were farmers.
Rantel	Father received high school education; mother received junior high school education.	Both parents were workers.
Ying	Father received university education; mother received high school education.	Father was a high school teacher; mother was a worker.
Tina	Both parents received university education.	Father worked in the city government; mother was an elementary school teacher.
Eva	Father received junior high school education; mother received elementary education	Father was a technician and a farmer; mother was a farmer.

Source: Data from the first interview

Table 7 shows that respondents were raised up in families with divergent educational and professional backgrounds. As I raised the question about their parents' influence in their lives, almost all respondents reported that their parents stressed education, regardless of their own

educational and professional background. Some respondents mentioned other significant people in their lives. For example, Rachael talked about her English teacher in her elementary school, “She influenced me a lot. I did very well in English because of her. Her teaching was so fun and enlightened. She gave us confidence. ” In Laura’s case, she mentioned the significant person in her childhood was her uncle, her mother’s brother, who “in our eyes might not be highly educated” but according to Laura, “he was a very able person who read a lot and had an interest in many things.” The uncle often made time reading with Laura and telling stories. Such an experience helped Laura develop her interest in reading literary classics and this habit continues into today.

Table 8 Childhood community environment

Code of respondents	Location of community	Play area for children
Wendong	A small city in South China	Just some old and plain facilities, mainly for old people to exercise though
Yulian	Country, North China	The school in the community had a big playground with a basketball stand and several ping pang tables.
Laura	Country, South China	Nothing like a playground. But the environment was very close to nature with a river in front of the village where there was the main play area for children.
Cathy	A big coastal city in South China, which is very close to Hong Kong	A nice playground nearby, with a slide and a climbing rack and a green grass field
Rachael	A big city in South China	Some facilities for kids to play in the community center square
Yani	A provincial capital city in North China	A nearby school has some simple, not colourful and modern facilities to play
Selina	Suburban area of a big city in South China	A relatively closed community with a big playground in the school but only a small area of green grass and some old facilities
Yona	Country, North China	A big playground, but with almost no facilities.
Rantel	A medium sized city in North China.	A playground that can be turned into a skating rink in winter; some simple facilities in the community
Ying	A small city in North China	Some facilities in the residence close to the factory her mother worked; a playground in the school
Tina	A provincial capital city in South China	With quite some facilities made of bamboo, but playground was not big.
Eva	Country, North China	Just a playground in the school in the village; the junior high school in the town had a better playground

Source: Data from the first interview

Because respondents in this study were aged 29 to 41, their childhood can be dated back to more than 20 years ago. Therefore, it is understandable that in Table 8, we see the community environment the respondents used to live in was not as colourful as what one can expect to see in

either China or Canada today. But most of the respondents expressed that in such an environment, they could still enjoy themselves a lot because of the close and friendly neighbourhood relations and safe play environment (e.g., parents did not even need to supervise them in the play area). In Laura's case, she repeatedly mentioned the beautiful river and surroundings where she and her little companions used to have such a good time playing every day. She said: "Every day, we went to school and came back by swimming in that river. That was so much fun, better than any school activities." Rantel came from North China where the weather conditions resemble the city she is now living in and she is the only one who has experienced skating and long winter for real. Insightfully, Selina offered her reflection of her childhood community environment, which I use as a good transition to my next topic.

> I spent my childhood days in a relatively pure and simple environment with little influence from the outside secular culture. I say it was simple, because it was kind of closed and mono-cultural. And the type of people I came in contact with were also kind of uniformed. This, I say, has both positive and negative sides. Because of its simplicity, my knowledge about the complicatedness of the world was never sufficient. It took me much more time to learn the life in the outside world. And in retrospective, that simplicity, I feel is not the same as accommodating or being open. Only after I have experienced many encounters during and after immigration, I have been learning to be accommodating. . . . But over here this is a multicultural society, with multi-ethnicities, multi-classes, and multi-educational backgrounds. (Selina)

Experiences associated with immigration and adjustment of life in Canada

About experiences associated with immigration and adjustment of life in Canada, Yulian has very well summarized what these immigrant parents have gone through by saying,

> Indeed, in the process of immigration and adjustment, parents have to make a whole long list of choices, such as whether to move the whole family or only part of the family, whether maintain or completely leave the job in China, because you cannot be sure if you will be able to get a job or not in a new place, whether to study or to work, who should sacrifice his/her personal interest to support the family, what to learn and what jobs to pursue etc., each of the decisions may be followed by a series of consequences. At the same time, you have to consider many other factors, social factors for example. When it comes to choices about children, we have to determine when it will be appropriate to get pregnant, whether to have one or two children, and how to raise them, and about our old parents. . . . we seem to go down an endless road. But you see, these are the cost, in exchange for what we expect to live in a better environment, like fresh air and safe food, and to have a better future for the kids. (Yulian)

This summary has very well touched many aspects of immigrants' life such as family, life directions and childrearing. For immigrants who used to have a relatively stable and comfortable life with little fluctuations back in their home countries, these moments of decisions can pose many tests for them. Indeed, Yulian has brought up the challenge of life ambiguities experienced in the everyday realities of these immigrants. Eva said, "now I am living in Canada, I cannot boast to say that I know about this country, after all, about many things, I am still an outsider."

Experiences related to life changes

Responses to my question "what changes immigration have brought to your life" were consistent with what was revealed in the previous literature (e.g., in Man's study, 2002).The organizational and institutional aspects of changes in immigrants' life pose challenges to immigrant families in this study. Many parents reported they experienced hardships in life upon arrival in the new

country and environment. Excerpts in this part deal with the challenges they have encountered in many aspects of their lives, their rethinking about life and values in life, and their self-adjustment in life.

Challenges and learning in life

Looking back at life experiences in their first several years of settlement in Canada, parents remembered moments of cultural shock along with confusions and feelings of being lost and helplessness. But the degree of stress was noticed to vary with individual respondent. Some respondents related to their stress of being unable to seek stable and proper employment. Rachael said, "Too big change, especially about my job, I do not feel safe. I do not have this feeling of being a master citizen in this country." On the contrary, Wendong, the only father to be interviewed, gave me a response that I characterized as manly, he said,

> I had language difficulty when I came here. You know, I used to work a long time in Japan. But my point is: wherever you go, in the new country or new environment, even just in China, you have to go through this process of adjustment. You should be mentally prepared for that. Your attitude toward change can affect the way you handle difficulties in your life. (Wendong)

Cathy happened to echo Wendong's point of view. She attributed her attitude to her rich experiences of traveling around the world and to her language competence. She said, "Remember the song? 'Go see the world and brave yourself in the storm (here she referred to a song called *jing feng yu, jian shi mian* in Chinese, which literally means, to enable yourself, you need to try and explore the world without fearing difficulties).'"

Besides, some seemingly "small things" in life, such as searching for daycare, banking, choosing proper insurances, can all pose challenge to immigrants and stress them out. They

could now talk about some anecdotes in daily life in a that-was-funny attitude. For example, Yulian related her experience in finding daycare services and schools for children,

> I went to the university myself, but I did not know the daycare was just located somewhere on the campus. I now feel it was funny that I spent so much time searching for a daycare and took time to visit them. I took buses and hated to wait for the buses in cold winter…Eventually, I thought I could put my kid in that daycare, and they said they would put us on the waiting-list. That was such an experience that made me feel… I do not know how to describe that moment. The experience of finding a school for my kid was also funny. I had no idea about schools. To be honest, I did not realize I need to contact school and go register for kid myself. I just took it for granted that kids automatically move on to school and kindergarten will do everything for me, because that was the case for my schooling. You never need to fill out so many forms in schools in China. Here, if you happen to choose a wrong school, more work will fall on you, and your kids too. (Yulian)

For another example, it was common for parents to express frustration toward expensive and not-available-at-anytime daycare services. And without relatives and friends around, help was not that handy for these families. Besides, the cost of hiring people to help with housework or to babysit children was relatively too much to be accepted due to low family earnings at the time and the need to set aside a sum of money to cover unavoidable cost, such as rent, transportation, study, long distance travel expense, and life necessities. Some parents like Rachael and Selina found it difficult to balance work and family life, not to mention the work itself might be unstable. Yona's experience may be representative among immigrant parents. She mentioned about drastic increase of housework partly due to the decline of family income and

partly due to the unavailability of acquaintances around. As a result, she and her husband often got into argument about how to share the housework fairly. She said: “immigration is a good test for marriages.”

On the positive side, immigration is a good test for life skills and provides a chance for immigrants, immigrant mothers in particular, to make up for a lesson in life competency. When I asked them to tell me some good changes in life after immigration, Rachael and Tina mentioned that they have learned a lot about cooking and were able to bake varieties of desserts, about which their parents and relatives could hardly imagine. Tina was very proud to tell me that before coming to Canada, she never cooked at home, because her mother and sisters were doing all the things to support her study and work. Yulian also mentioned that it took her a long time to learn to drive, to bank and to choose from all types of insurances, which “used to be man’s business.” Yani related to her big improvement in “multi-tasking.” These experiences proved valuable in their later life, though a little bitterness may remain in the memory. Eventually they have come to the conclusion that being capable in work and study is “not enough for a person’s full life.” As a result, some parents used what they have learnt from their own personal life experiences to advise other immigrants.

In addition, some parents also mentioned that help from friendly Canadian people had eased the life stress and brought comfort to the family. For example, Rachael and Wendong had a mutual friend named Bruce. Both of them mentioned that Bruce was an old, friendly and faithful Christian. Rachael said,

> He often picked up immigrants from the airport and drove them to their rented places. I got a clean mattress and quite some kitchen utensils from him. You know, I am not a religious person, but he invited us and many other immigrants to their church for free

> food… I cannot measure how much help he gave us. He made me believe there are good people in Canada… I now, sometimes, I give some useful information to new immigrants too. I introduce Bruce to them, telling them about garage sale, yeah, I got lots of stuff from garage sale, saved me money. New immigrants spend more than they can earn. Those resources can help them a lot. (Rachael)

Challenges to communication

Challenges in everyday life of course are not just reflected in tangible life, they can be also reflected in the difficulties in communication and clashes of views which are derived from differences in cultural norms, social systems as well as personal interpretations and understandings. For example, Eva said,

> Although you can also find people of like mind here, the reason lies in personality not culture, still, if you think then I can make lots of local Canadian friends, I feel that is not as easy as making friends with Chinese people. Because with Chinese people, you can just sit down and you have many topics to talk about. It takes much longer time to find a friend among Westerners. And you also can find lots of things you are unable to communicate. This may be due to cultural difference. Understandably, our interests, our way of liking things, our socio-economic base, our childhood, these things all connect with culture. You don't have this communication gap as huge among Chinese people. (Eva)

Yani said she never liked the idea of giving tips in the restaurant because, "First, you know, we do not do this in China. Second, why, it doesn't sound very reasonable. We all work to serve. Isn't that the work ethics should apply to all working people including waiters and waitresses?"

Some sensitive topics in certain areas of life can also become obstacles to communication due to differences in social systems as well as personal interpretations and understandings. To my interest, Yulian mentioned a case of what she termed as “cultural alienation.” She told me that once she was on a bus, the driver out of nowhere raised the topic of Chinese government suppressing the culture of Tibetan people. When she was asked how she viewed the Chinese government’s action in dealing with the leaders in the riots in Tibet. (The driver did not use the word “riot.” And those leaders were imprisoned because of their involvement in actual violence toward ordinary Chinese people of other ethnic groups). She said, “They deserved it.” The driver looked bit astonished and he stopped talking to her. Yulian added a comment to this happening by saying “Westerners choose to believe in what they want to believe. But they certainly should not think they hold the truth, because they were not there.” Yulian’s experience brought about a profound aspect of social life, and very likely could fuel up another heated discussion of freedom, human rights and democracy and many more, which I have to resist the temptation of going too far from the focus of this study.

Cathy and Yani reported they didn’t experience too much difficulty in communication. Both of them were very confident about their English language competency. Cathy said, “I feel if you want to open yourself, language should not be a too big problem.”

Community environment in Canada

Speaking about the knowledge about the community, whether narrowly defined or broadly defined, my respondents have approached the topic from different perspectives. One perspective has connected the geographic feature of the city with its impact on people’s interaction. For example, Cathy is an urban designer, her talk closely related to her profession. She said,

The way to understand community can be from two angles – its physical settings and its neighbourhood climate. Back in China, if you look at the physical aspect of a neighbourhood, you don't have a big space for anything; for example, you will not be able to clearly define an area for public use. But, in a small closed compound, you can meet lots of people. So you can have a chat with people if you want to, this is due to the density in the residential living area. You will not find it difficult to find someone to chat, children also find other kids easily. Over here, I feel they are making an effort toward humanizing the neighbourhood. But you have to admit, the density is too low. They like single houses, due to their value of privacy, people like single houses, and they don't like to be disturbed in their life. But this can cause contradiction. They have to have a community center, so people and kids have a place to go. And other factors, like the price of the houses, and people's needs at a certain stage of their life also involve. So people from certain socio-economic status can cluster in a certain neighbourhood. Like in Citadel, we have lots of young kids. What I want to say is that the physical characteristics of the community, though they want to make it easier for people to interact, it actually limits the interaction among people. Because you have to go to community center, or you can hardly see any people in the neighbourhood if the density in the neighbourhood is very low. But the single house community in Canada is popular and typical, and scattered. That, in the opinion of an urban designer, we say, like, Chinese cul-de-sac gives more taste of neighbourhood living. Because it is constructed in such a way that it is not too big, and dozens of families share a main common road. You have privacy too, because only your neighbours pass your front door. This road is not for traffic. People

> like that kind of way of living, the cul-de-sac, quite expensive though, but you have density as well as privacy. (Cathy)

Rachael who was learning environmental design at the time happened to echo Cathy's point by saying,

> We learn courses on the future sustainability of community design. They are mainly about how to rebuild the communities. That is to say, Canada also recognized the effect of its geographical feature, for example, community usually occupies a big land and very scattered. Besides, the design of the road depends on the vehicle transportation. Such features have caused the isolation, physically and psychologically. Certainly it will affect people's interaction with each other. China usually uses compact design for communities. So the density of people in the community makes it easy for people to get to know each other. Here, I don't meet many people in the neighbourhood. And kids have to stay with me all the time. Hopefully we can get to know some families in summer. (Rachael)

Eva also mentioned children did not have many choices in making friends in the community, but she added that this could also be due to the child's personality.

Another perspective has expanded the concept of community to a broader sense. Selina compared the similarities and differences in two cultures based on her personal observations. She said,

> The two cultures are in many ways similar as well as different… I think people can find more differences at first. For example, different languages, different traditions, and history can also produce lots of differences in customs, and ways of treating people. Just a simple example, Chinese people use chopsticks, while Westerners use forks and knives; Chinese may make some sounds when they eat, to show their satisfaction with food,

> while Westerners may consider that as impolite and they close their mouth when eating. But those are just observation on the surface. Other differences… over here, the legal system and social warfare system are relatively more effective. Besides, the society is relatively wealthier, which are reflected in its rich natural resources and considerable investments, plus, the population is relatively small… while China, first it is a developing country, second the average per capita resources including various resources, like educational resources in China is much less. Competition happens in any area of life, even food supply, even educational resources. So it is understandable that you can see these differences through phenomena. I also see the difference as reflected in people's attitude toward aging. Old people, I mean when people are over sixties, in Canada, old people do not seem to be as old as old people in China. They can still live an energetic and young life. And people seem to be more accommodating, about life and everything… I believe all these phenomena have something to do with its broadness and resourcefulness. But due to its unique national conditions, Chinese appears more gravitation toward collectivism… Similarities, to be frank, I feel human nature is universally similar. You can find introverted or extroverted people anywhere, regardless of what societies or which countries they are from. For example, it is considered a virtue to respect the aged and love the young in any culture. For another example, malicious competitions among people happen in the offices everywhere…(Selina)

Eva interpreted her understanding of community from the perspective of people. She said,

> My whole life, up to now, has been in a constant change. From elementary school to junior high, from high school to university, and then from university to work, I never stayed in one place for a long time. And at home, I mostly concentrated on my study. As

> far as I can remember, in my childhood, my family seldom needed me to do housework or field work. So in a sense, the physical community was not the main source of influence on me. Rather, I think I was shaped by the process of constant change as well as people I got to know in this process. At every stage of my life, I was and am lucky enough to find some people with the like mind. I believe they might have had some influence on me. So it does not matter where you grow up, even in China, lots of people will not become my friends. But in Canada, you can still find some like-minded friends. So when you do not have a job, you may come to question your ability or you may think Canadians are in this way or that way different from us. But that understanding is incomplete and lopsided. (Eva)

From other perspectives, some other respondents expressed that they found many good aspects of living in Canada. For example, Laura stated,

> About the immediate community I am living in (I assume she is talking about the neighbourhood) and the big community, or the city, I like both, better than the city I used to live in. I especially like the environment, very peaceful. And I like the colours in the summer. Besides, people have simple relationship. I feel neighbours are friendly too, simple friendship. I really like the life over here. (I asked if her satisfaction with life was greatly due to the reason that her parents were living with them). Maybe that also affects my feeling of satisfaction. Yeah, with a big family, this should be a reason too, I keep busy all the time every day. All the time, I cannot rest. So there is no chance for me to get depressed. I have someone to communicate in the family. (Laura)

Rethinking about life and self

Toward my questions about how they feel and evaluate the changes in their life due to immigration, these parents reported perplexed feelings and indicated that immigration as a life transition has provided a chance for them to rethink about life and values in life. For example, many of my respondents, such as Eva, Laura, Tina and Cathy have mentioned that back in China they used to be so busy earning money and could not pay much attention to the quality of life and life of children. As an illustration, I here put down Eva's thought, very insightful and representative. She said,

> I feel it's hard to use just a word "like" to describe my mixed feelings toward life in Canada (here she used the Chinese word *wu wei za chen*, which literally means having all kinds of seasonings and spices spilt out), until now, I sometimes feel not so sure if immigration is the right decision. At least I was not one hundred percent sure. But I agree that every decision may be followed by gains and losses. But directly, immigration does bring tremendous influence in my life. The good aspect of immigration. . . . because before immigration, I worked so hard, often exhausted myself. Although I did accumulate quite some working experiences through those years of work, I feel, I felt bit numb about my life, and it is that you are directionless — you do not know what you are working for, probably for promotion, or for better wages. It is possible that I, and many others, have paid too much attention on the material aspect of life. But now, after immigration, I seem to think through some of the things, at least I am much clearer about what I want. I think age also works in this process in addition to the cause of immigration. . . . yeah, I have reached this age of standing firm and living without doubt (here she is using the words from the Analects of Confucius *san shi er li, si shi bu huo*), immigration and age, both

> work. I have experienced this big turn in my life, I feel I have gone through many thinking. This provides a chance for me to precipitate, and to sort out things in my life. This I view is a positive side of immigration. (Eva)

From Eva's words, I can see that although immigration posed many challenges and could result in perplexed feelings, there are immigrants like Eva who could also see the positive side of immigration and they have made use of it to adjust to life in Canada. Selina expressed that she viewed immigration a chance to enrich her life experience. She said,

> Immigration, no doubt is a big challenge. Because I think, it has brought about incredible change on one's mind. Take myself for example, I have exposed myself to the wider world, and I have become more accommodating. And this is a channel to connect you with a colourful world. My previous life experience, due to my living environment, I had a bit of blind self-pride. Because I have had a life that could be considered middle or upper class standard, say, I had good income, well-educated background, and received due respect. These factors built in me the blind self-pride…so I never took initiatives to learn or show enough care to people of other classes or people living at the bottom of the society. So after coming to Canada, I was kind of falling to the bottom of the society myself, this allowed me to get to know how people of low social class are living, their life could be more miserable than us immigrants. For immigrants, in the first several years, they may experience a sudden drop in their income as well as socio-economic status. But I feel, in the long run, what they have experienced will prove to enrich their life experience. (Selina)

Selina's words were very encouraging. As I asked her to evaluate the change in her life, she said,

> I cannot say I like all these changes, but just that I have to face them, regardless of how I feel. You have no choice but face them. If from an optimistic perspective, or an objective perspective, I will say this is a good experience, because you may try from different angles to accommodate and to understand what you might not understand and accommodate before. For example, about gay people, about different religious and ethnic groups, you can try to respect their choice and influence, although you do not necessarily agree with them. (Selina)

For Yulian, immigration has proved to be a process of self-questioning to confidence-regaining. She mentioned that she was once questioning if her decision to study MBA was right, because that was considered by other Chinese even her husband as not practical or down-to-earth (here she used the Chinese word *xu*, which is derived from Chinese philosophy about *xu* vs. *shi* or *yin* vs. *yang*. Depending on the context, the word can mean void or vacant or illusionary or hollow or false or fictitious or empty, and many other meanings). She fell in confusion for a long time. She said,

> I never doubted about my ability to make a living in the new country in the past. But there have been a while that I began to doubt about myself. That was definitely the influence of immigration. I did so well with my job in China, but I began to question myself if that was all because I had good luck or I had a good leader or… maybe I was capable. I was entangled with this thought for a long time. And after we came, for a long time…you know most of the people, they will think, with technical skills, like people working in the lab…that probably explains why so many Chinese people engage in jobs like accounting or computer programing. These Chinese people value technical skills related jobs much more than language skills related jobs…I remember even my husband

> once laughed at me saying that people like me doing *xu* (refer to the explanation above) jobs 'How can you live?' And indeed, I have lived in a fear for quite some time, for about three years, until I got into an MBA program. That feeling of fear made me feel that I could not find myself and I did not know what to do. I did not even know if I could survive in this country…so before I met these competent people, I did begin to believe that accounting might be a good job, otherwise why so many Chinese immigrants rushed for it, at least, that was not *xu*…but at the time I finished my MBA study, although I did not succeed in finding a job right away, I told my husband that I did not feel regret at all. I said I gave myself a chance to recognize my capability, just by finishing MBA alone, because that was not easy, and by being in the same program with so many outstanding people. The whole learning process helped me regain confidence, and I found people with the like mind. So now I feel there is nothing wrong doing *xu* jobs, at least it is also needed by this society, although it is not rare that you do not see immediate material reward. (Yulian)

Yulian actually has raised a meaningful point that the impact of immigration on people who used to do or are doing language related or soft skills related jobs can be somewhat different from the impact of immigration on people who used to do or are doing technical skills related jobs.

From another perspective, Rachael's talk, as part of her response to my question about her definition of a successful child, described a change in her perception of self. She mentioned,

> Because I was raised up in such a tradition that my parents were very strict with me and they did not think happiness is important. Especially my mom, she considered the pursuit of material happiness like eating and playing reflects a person's poor taste. And they see these things are no good at all. So the kind of education they gave me is that I should

> sacrifice my happiness to satisfy their standard of being successful. But that success is measured by using their or other people's standards, they decide your value. But this does not make the kid happy. To a kid, happiness is the most important. (Rachael)

Selina happened to have gone through the similar thinking about self. She said,

> I personally have this feeling that I have been adapted to life in Canada not too bad. But it is possible that in some people's eyes, I am not successful, or even a failure, if compared with my income and life status before. I admit that my income drops quite a bit, and level of living as well…a big gap. About my social status, my observation is that this society per se does not artificially set a fine line between lowliness and nobleness. As a person, even you do not have a job or whatever job you are doing, everybody can live to equality. So that is my personal feeling. Although drops happened to my income and possibly also social status, I myself am not that upset about the change. (Selina)

When seeking answers to why some children can go to so many OST activities while other children cannot, responses from these parents made me feel I should give due attention to the role of grandparents in these Chinese immigrants families aside from factors such as parents socioeconomic status and availability of other resources in life. Tina, Rachael, Rantel, Laura and Wendong all mentioned that it was great to have grandparents stay with them although there sometimes were small conflicts because of divergence in life habits and needs, or disagreement in childrearing beliefs. Just a little help such as washing dishes, doing the laundry or telling stories to children or just keep an eye on them relieved much burden from the tired shoulder of these immigrant Chinese parents. Laura's talk about the change in her values related to the family has also raised my interest. Her parents were granted immigration status a year ago, and thereafter have been staying with Laura's family. She said,

> The *greatest* change in me brought about by the immigration is I have never valued my family as much as now. We used to pay too much attention to work and earning money. I remember when my first child was only three month old, I was assigned a job in another city for two months. And without too much thinking, I just went. When I came back home, my kid could not recognize me anymore. I remember I even cried. But we didn't change much with our busy working. Immigration is a good break. So I have a chance to rethink some of the important things in our life. And I am now really enjoying the comfort and peace staying with my family every day. My children love their grandparents. They will gradually understand the importance of family values. (Laura)

Laura used the word "greatest" to stress the change in her family life due to her revisit of the importance of some family values. Undoubtedly, due to the particular situation immigrant families are confronting, some immigrants may begin to reconsider the importance of family integrity, which gives the chance for traditional family values to regain their position and strength and which may cast certain influence on the next generation as to how to understand the traditional Chinese value of filial piety. As an addition to this topic, I also noted down how Ying explained about the change in family life. She also mentioned that she used to live a very busy life, busy with work and busy with people. But after coming to Canada, she turned to pay more attention to family life. She said,

> Now family is the center of my life. You do not find many places for entertainment. I mean the kind of entertainment appropriate for immigrants and close to you. So the best choice is staying at home and being with kids. (Ying)

Children's adjustment to life in Canada

Responses to my question about children's adjustment to life in Canada varied from family to family. But my general impression is that parents believed life for children over here in Canada should be more fun than that in China. Cathy said, "If my child was not raised up in Canada, she probably would not have so much fun. You know we might just find a stay-in-home babysitter for her. Or we could just leave her to her grandparents and take our time going out and doing things we want to do." In addition, most of the parents showed optimism in their children's adjustment and future life in Canada. Selina shared her insight by saying,

> I believe they can be more courageous to live their life and to meet any challenges the life brings to them. This is maybe due to my own experiences and the education that I have received. If I can face the life challenges, they certainly can. They live in a society that allows them so good educational opportunities. They are given the chance to learn more languages and they are given the good training to develop their intelligence and mental health. Plus, I have intentionally given them life skills trainings. So my belief is that they sure can adjust well, besides, they will develop a recognition of this society. They can assimilate into the social life much better than us first generation immigrants. (Selina)

When asked "how you feel about their children's English language competency," some respondents mentioned about difficulties children have encountered due to their limited English. For example, Eva mentioned that her son did not speak English at all when he came to Canada with his parents at around one and half years old, she said,

> Looking back, I believe immigration more or less had some influence on him, although that was not very obvious. He was in the daycare for quite a long period of time. Within this period…you know he did not know any English…before immigration, some people

> told us that it will not take long for children to learn English and they will adjust to the new environment soon. But my observation was that English did influence him. Even until now, I feel he is not that strong with his English…his personality might have confounded the influence. And maybe this is common among boys. But I remember I saw him struggling in the daycare. I can tell. He was also going through that process of adjustment. I noticed. I remember I even said to my husband or others about this. Kids are unlike adults. We can read. We can tell if we feel something not good. But little kids, even when they feel uncomfortable, they may not be able to sound that out. I even put down my observation in my diary then. That impact might not be huge, but definitely felt in kids. (Eva)

And she added that language barrier can also make it hard for children to make friends in the school.

> When kids are young, they need friends. If he cannot make friends, he will be isolated. Boys will bully him. They will do that. That is typical, if you don't speak their language. They will call you some bad or funny names. Or they will, in kids' language, tell on, that means to say something bad about you behind your back. They will say something bad about you even you did not do anything wrong. That can make your kids feeling upset. But if you have a friend, who is there supporting you, that can make a difference. Language plays a big role, but other factors also work, for example, we say birds of a feather flock together. But definitely, peer relationship can influence them. (Eva)

With similar experience, Rachael mentioned her daughter became much quieter because she could not understand other kids well.

Some parents like Selina and Ying revealed that they themselves could not speak very good English, so at home they might not be able to help much. Ying mentioned that she was feeling difficult to educate her child sometimes, "because our learning about Western culture is not sufficient. For example, some not so good words, the kids may be used them at appropriate time, but you think that is bad and you blame them, that will upset kids." Despite of that, parents all reported that they did not worry about their children's English too much because children were very young and as long as they were given the chance and emerged in the language environment, language should not be a problem for them.

Ideas derived from work experiences in Canada

Parents' account of their ideas derived from their work experiences in Canada has provided a picture about one aspect of immigrants' life in Canada, which reflected their understanding of the important competencies and values in the host culture and their understanding of people in the host culture.

Understanding of the important competencies in the work place

Ability to properly handle people relationship, ability to communicate, ability to problem-solve, and ability to behave in accordance with the norms have been brought up as important competencies by my respondents. It is frequently mentioned in parents' statements the importance of the ability to get along with people in the work place and team work ethics. Laura shared her observation about the importance of good people relationship. She said,

> I myself also have involved in face-to-face interviews sometimes. And my observation is that when acquiring the same level of skills, those who make you feel comfortable and easy to get along with usually will be hired eventually. I see sometimes they even tend to hire the one with fewer experiences, just because the person makes you feel comfortable

> and easy to get along with. You can tell that when having conversations with them. (Laura)

She continued to explicitly admit that her work experience influenced her and caused a change in her mind. She said,

> Back in China, it is quite right that you work really hard in order to overtop others. I used to work that way too. I was always pushing myself and wanted to be that best one, the one that can out-compete any other student or colleague. I even used that way of thinking in raising my own child. But I have changed my mind now. I feel it is even better if she can develop a good character, and can get along well with other people. Her character decides her fate. This is very important. (Laura)

From another perspective, Tina mentioned that she came across an article on the internet analyzing why Indian people seem to live better than Chinese in the work place in North America. And from another perspective, she interpreted what is proper people relationship. She said, “In many work places in America, you can see more Indians holding the management positions than Chinese. Language fluency could be one factor, but definitely it is not the most important factor.”

I was curious, so I went after this topic and hoped to seek out her further thinking about this topic. Tina attributed this phenomenon to the cultural reasons.

> Chinese value compliance, which stresses to accept what the authority makes you do, on the other hand, leadership or skills related to proper and equal people relationship are not treated as important, and also we are not properly taught how to socialize without losing your self-esteem. This is rooted in the way we deal with our work, people around us and even the world. Even today we are allowed some power and control of our own life, and

> the world is more humane, but this value of compliance is in the root. Don't you see that lots of parents, because they fear their kids cannot get a job, they educate them to be happy with what they have and in that way you will not think of questioning the improperness of what is given to you. Of course if you are good at math or science, that will be double safe. (Tina)

Eva's work experiences in Canada contributed to her understanding of problem-solving and communication as the kinds of competencies needed in this society. She said,

> I believe problem solving is one of the most important competencies children should acquire. In Canada, many people, they can speak very good English, like many local Canadian people. But when it comes to his problem solving aspect of ability, due to their lack of life experiences, they may not be as good as some immigrants. My opinion comes from my work experiences over here. Take my work for example, I now often have chances to discuss or negotiate with government officials, or management from other companies. When they come to buy our product, they will evaluate many things first. At this stage, they often will raise many questions, and you have to know how to handle that. Some people have very fluent English, but the answers they give not just away from the point, but sometimes confusing. You have to understand the point of their question. And you also need problem solving skills to handle that. I feel thankful that they highly appreciated my thinking and ability for problem-solving. (Eva)

Concerning language competence in the work place, Laura said,

> I believe language represents an asset when you come to a new place. If you do not speak their language, you can find it very hard to make your own way. However good you are with your work, if you have difficulty to verbally make it known, that will be a problem,

> plus, Chinese people per se are not good at expressing. If you do not possess language competence, sometimes you can hardly show other aspects of your competence in your work. And to be worse, you can hardly make yourself accepted among your colleagues. On the other hand, if you have good English competence, you will find it easier to let your best qualities seen. The first two years we arrived in Canada… actually my husband almost did not pass the English exam when we applied for immigration. His English was far from qualifying him for an employment. So I chose to work to support him. For two years, he learnt English in several programs in Mont Royal, Sait, and U of C. Those programs trained him as if he was an English major. He learnt how to sound out like a native speaker. I myself had never got a chance to learn that way. (Laura)

On the other hand, Eva's experience has given language competence another interpretation. She said,

> Take my current job for example. After all the interviews, the HR manager raised this question: what do you think you need to improve most. The company is using lot of IT technology in production. And at the time, I do not have that background. So I answered I need to improve my knowledge in the IT field most. But the manager put it indirectly that it was my communication skills. So you know, the implication is that every potential employer may have some concerns about your language competence. This is definitely the impact of immigration, tremendous impact. I assume that the manager or the company has to take great risk to eventually hire me. I do not think they ever regretted about using me. They value my work experience. On the other hand, my language fluency, my writing, certainly cannot compete with local Canadians. That is obvious. I many times still feel confused about English grammar. Like the other day, I was not too

> sure whether I could add an "s" at the end of word "literature." Things like that are not rare. I can only use hard way to learn. When people tell me this is wrong use, I then know this is wrong use. There is no way that I can realize the wrong use by myself. But of course, my language is good enough to handle the job. But communication can be a more complicated matter. (Eva)

Eva's experience gave a very clear interpretation of what language competence should be. It is not just about the knowledge of a language; it is also about how well you use them, greatly depending on how well you know the norms in the work place, which, in other words, can be called communicative competence.

To my interest, Selina used her personal experience to illustrate how much you can sink yourself into embarrassment if you do not have enough knowledge about the norms and rules in the work place. She said she was once invited to a dinner by a company. At the time of ordering dessert, she happened to have ordered the most expensive one, because she did not realize there was a special offer and she did not even know those strange names of dessert. Besides, when she saw at the dinner the senior manager who was supposed to interview her the week after, she was seen to be so anxious to talk to that person. Even when the dinner was over and when everyone was ready to leave, she held him up for a talk. She said, "I did not succeed in that interview, because people think I was too 'aggressive.' That was a very bad word they used on me."

Yulian mentioned that her work experience in Canada gave her chances to observe the commonalities and differences of human beings regardless of their cultural or ethnic background. She stated,

> I, like many other Chinese people, used to think that Westerns are comparatively more honest and frank about their opinions and Chinese like to wind their ways around the

> topic and are more reserved when it comes to showing feelings. But I actually do not feel that way now. Perhaps it is a difference between individuals more than a difference between cultures. Besides, I cannot remember who said that Chinese are calculating and Westerners are forthright or outspoken. That is not the case either. In the office, Westerners also have 'politics.' Immigrants are far from becoming the threat to them. That is why many immigrants only see one side of the working relationship. So if you say the two cultures are very different, I feel this point of view need to be adjusted. Differences exist more between people of classes. I also have another example. In the first two years of my study in Canada, the school got me a mentor. They are experienced in your field and are there to guide you…after we got to know each other quite well, I found, she and me have many things in common, including our attitudes toward some social phenomena, our way of dealing with criticisms and some of our general world views. So I come to the conclusion that people can always find their matches in different cultures, different countries, or different ethnicities. (Yulian)

For Yulian, and maybe many other immigrants as well, I guess it is a new and happy finding that there are some people from another culture with whom you can communicate and share your life knowledge. I call this "alliance across cultures."

Communication and language barrier in work place

Language competence, according to my respondents, was critical in their experiences of seeking employment. But in Laura's case, even with a good command of language, for a language major, this can turn into a disadvantage. Following her story of supporting her husband to learn English, Laura added,

> But I feel… I used to be an English major… The job chances for a language major are not as many as that for a professional engineer. So I did everything to support him and then he would be able to find a professional job after receiving English training. But as an English major, over here, I feel we do not have much advantage compared with other professionals. I have a schoolmate who worked as a post doctor in a university in Guangzhou (the capital city of Canton province in China) and later he got a teaching job in the same university. He told me that he was thinking about immigration too. But I said, what is the meaning of doing that? If you decide to switch to other professions, that takes a long time and you cannot guarantee you can find a better job compared with your present job. He soon will be promoted to professorate. And besides, he is a man, which means he has to support the whole family living. After all, I am a woman, I can count on my husband for a living here. At least my husband is a professional engineer. I do not have professional skills other than English. It is hard, I think. Although you can also choose to learn something else, you have to start early. But in my case, I had to support my husband to learn English and I had to take care of small kids. I had no choice but work. (Laura)

Laura's thought about disadvantages of a language major in seeking a professional career was greatly in consonant with what Yulian has mentioned before about how Chinese people think about *xu* work. They have suggested another layer of difficulty posed on professional immigrant mothers who used to be trained in language or soft skills related jobs.

Work experiences associated with language barrier to a certain degree can also reflect the attitude of the host society toward immigrants, which, according to my respondents, showed

accommodation as well as discrimination. Eva mentioned her failure in a job seeking experience due to her language competence, which happened in her fourth year after immigration. She said,

> Around the time I was about to graduate from the Master program, I started looking for jobs. That was a year full of unexpectedness and failure. Lots of interviews, but failed to get a job. I still remember one. I was chosen for the fifth round of interview, but still failed at last. I myself afterwards have also analyzed that experience. I told my husband that was discrimination. As a matter of fact, if the company doesn't appreciate my ability, they will not let me into the fifth round of interview. They already know my immigrant status. But I am just thinking, you know my English ability at the very beginning, if you have no confidence in my language competence, you can just eliminate me in the first round. I told my husband and I think this is discrimination. I came to this thought because the company came to school and chose two applicants including myself and another person for further interviews after preliminary screening. . . . I did the writing exam two weeks before they asked another applicant to do the writing exam. That applicant even did not receive the letter to write the exam beforehand. I know some members of the management wanted to offer me the job, but some others objected. They were questioning my language ability. That's why they came up with a writing exam at the final round. But I am still feeling that if you question my English, you can set up a writing test right at the first round. If you want this person, it just doesn't sound very right to set up this writing exam after the final round of face-to-face interview. So the lesson I learned from this experience is that, to find a job in Canada that matches MBA, as an immigrant you should know that companies have their doubts and misgivings about your language competence. (Eva)

Wendong and Yulian also mentioned that several people in their friends' circle have been in Canada for quite some years yet failed to seek full employment, "because their English just not good." Tina's husband is a good example. Despite of his good educational background, he speaks with a heavy accent even in Chinese, and learning English is just no easy work for him.

So far, the learnings about participating parents' family, childhood experiences, and their immigration related life experiences have offered me rich contextual information and made sense of my further exploration into these parents' beliefs and practices related to childrearing.

Practices and beliefs associated with childrearing

Coming to a culture so different from their original one has given these parents a chance to reflect on the childrearing beliefs and practices they were used to and a chance for them to clarify some of their misunderstandings about childrearing in the Western world. In the following, I present data on general information about children, ideas associated with childrearing, as well as parents' perceptions about children's schooling in two cultures.

General information about children

In my first interview, to get a general picture about the preschool children, I asked parents to tell me something about their children's interests, and schools where they planned to send their children, and any other information that parents wanted to add.

Table 9 Background information about preschool age (4-6) children

Code of respondents	***Information about preschool children***		
	Child	Children's interest	School to attend
Wendong (father)	Boy	Not too sure, has to ask mom	Public school
Yulian (mother)	Boy	Reading, drawing, TV, pretend play	Public school
Rantel (mother)	Boy	Video games, drawing, science	Charter school
Yona (mother)	Boy	Reading, science, video games, outdoor play	Public school
Selina (mother)	Boy	Drawing, TV	undecided
Eva (mother)	Boy	Reading, listening to music, board games, outdoor sports	Public school
Rachael(mother)	Girl	Drawing, dancing	French immersion school
Yani (mother)	Girl	Dancing, outdoor play,	Public school
Laura (mother)	Girl	Outdoor play, drawing, swimming	Public school
Tina (mother)	Girl	Drawing, swimming	Public school
Ying (mother)	Girl	Play with little friends, dancing	Public school
Cathy (mother)	Girl	Drawing, dancing, any outdoor sport	Public school

Source: Data from the first interview

Table 9 gives us general information about children in terms of their personal interest and schools their parents planned to send them to. Most of the children would be attending regular public school except for Rachael's and Rantel's children. About why she would send her little girl to French immersion school, Rachael explained that she actually did not think too much about it, but just that the little girl's best friend in the neighbourhood would go to that school. The mother of the friend suggested that Rachael could send her child to the same school so the friends could still stay together. Rantel was considering sending her child to a charter school, because "Many people told me that charter school students are more competent in academics as well as many other aspects compared to students of regular public school. I think competent peers can motivate him to study harder. Besides, teachers are strict and they use creative teaching method." Selina was the only parent who said she has not made up her mind about what school

her child would go to. Regarding children's personal interests, Cathy mentioned that her child had a delay in her speaking but her drawing came much earlier than speaking. Yulian said, "My child loves drawing. She is a creative child. I will let her draw at her freewill and will not consider taking her to lessons in the near future." Many parents mentioned their children loved sports, because "They love to play."

Clarification of childrearing beliefs and practices among Chinese and Western parents

From parents' accounts in relation to childrearing, I can surmise in the process of getting adjusted to the life in Canada, parents are also clarifying some of their thinking as well as misunderstandings about childrearing in the Western world. As Wendong stated,

> Before I moved to Canada, I learned about Canadian and American cultures mainly through media, such as films and newspapers. I, maybe also many other Chinese parents held such an idea that parents in Western countries like Canada and American, do not *guan* (a Chinese word with a connotation of training and managing) their kids. Like, as long as the kids reach eighteen years old, they will be kicked out of their home and become independent, and are not supposed to rely on parents anymore, so they will be completely the owner of their own life. I used to think, this is cool. Kids and parents can just choose to live their own life at their own will. But based on what I have experienced and observed in this country, I now feel this is a misunderstanding; at least this is not the case for all parents over here. I can give you an example about a couple. I got to know them when we worked in the lab together. Their daughter was successfully accepted by Harvard University last year. In order to accompany her and take care of her life, her parents quit their job here and moved to Boston. Isn't that the same as what our Chinese parents do, that parents always feel worrisome when their children are moving to a

faraway place. Even children in North America, they are their parents “pearls in hand” (here he used the Chinese idiom *zhang shang ming zhu,* which shows parents love their children to such an extent that they view them as the most precious thing in the world). Another thing, based on my personal interactions with people, what I have learnt about parenting in North America is that some parents are very considerate when choosing activities for their kids. They will consider their children’s strength as well as weakness, and choose the right thing for them. My colleague Sue has a little girl named Brantie. She was so small and thin. And Sue was a single mom. You know education in single parent family is worrisome and difficult… If Sue made Brantie go for sports, that can be too much challenge for this little girl. When Brantie was about five years of age, Sue drafted a plan for her daughter. She engaged Brantie in playing violin and drama performance. Sue told me the little girl’s experience of performing on the stage has hugely helped build up confidence in little Brantie. She later even had courage to run for election for president of student association when she was in junior high school. Not long ago, Brantie joined a student delegation for a tour around Europe, where she was invited to play violin for many times on the stage. I can tell that her experience with music and leadership will help add a beautiful colour to her application to university study in the future.

But what I have mentioned above doesn’t necessarily prove that parents over here do not care about children’s learning at all, as what I believed before. On the contrary, they also care about their children’s academic performance. Their commitment to children’s education is no less than our Chinese parents, I can tell. Once I communicated with a colleague about how to raise children, she gave me a long list of books that she might have used for her children. On the long list she gave me lots of information about

> reading, vocabulary, writing, math and comprehensive curriculum. What's more, she even provided information about publishers, writers and so on. I myself can hardly be compared with her in terms of an overall plan for children's learning.
>
> What I feel our Chinese parents can learn from them is that attention should be given to children's overall development, not just academic marks. And we also need to learn to encourage children more often. I see parents over here are never stingy in telling their children "good job, good try, you are great," etc. Chinese parents comparatively are too strict. My child once even said, "Dad, you are mean." I reflected about it myself. I do think we can learn from Western parents' positive and encouraging attitude. (Wendong)

Wendong has given me a long and a quite organized comment on childrearing, and his last comment was "Canadian parents of course can learn from Chinese parents too." It happened that Eva's experience also helped clarifying some of her past misunderstandings toward Western parents in terms of parenting beliefs and practices. She said,

> I get to know a mom. Her son is now also studying in my son's school. I learnt that both mom and dad are doctors. They used to live in Saskatchewan, but they moved to Calgary because of their children's education. They do not have GATE program [for gifted learners] in Saskatchewan. She told me that her son didn't like his school when he was in grade one and two. He was bored and confused. So they decided to move to Calgary and they chose Hillhurst School. So even among Western people, they have similar thinking to Chinese parents — they will also choose to move to a place where they can find good education for their children. (Here, he used the Chinese idiom *meng mu san qian*, which has a long story behind it. Briefly, it was about a mom who moved home three times because she believed being in company with good people and receiving proper education

> were the most important for her son). In fact, quite a number of parents, Chinese or Westerners, they moved to that area because of that school…and without exception, these Western parents all have good educational and professional background. We Chinese used to think Westerners do not care about kids' school marks… yeah, they do not talk about it, but they say they must find a school "that fits my child." Chinese parents choose schools, choose teachers, Western parents are doing the same thing. The explanation for this seems universal, because good schools and good teachers can help children build up on their strength and overcome their weakness… besides, I found these parents engaged in lots of school events, I believe they did so also out of the consideration that they could therefore leave school a good impression and that might be helpful for their kids' learning and promotion. . . . And kids in these Western families without exception are playing some sort of musical instrument and involved in sports programs after school. Although I never intentionally discussed with them about their motivations or purposes of sending their kids to those programs, I have observed what they are doing with kids and I reflected on some of these phenomena from a sidewise approach. (Eva)

In addition, Selina's words supported Eva's thought. She said,

> I didn't discuss with local Canadians about this topic, but I came across many comments on the Internet in those forums about kids' education. Some pointed out that Americans actually also stress children's academic performance. There must be some parents among Westerners who, like what people usually describe about Chinese parents, care about kids' academic performances. So I come to the understanding that, wherever you go, whichever country you are living in, you will see the kind of differences that separate some from others. Just that in Canadian society, there are differences in views between

> educated and less educated people, although there are some commonly acknowledged norms for all. But based on my personal experience, I can tell that the way I bring up my children and the beliefs I hold about education are not strange to Canadian parents with quite the same educational background. Intelligence and proper education always prove to be useful and important for the same reason. (Selina)

Rachael echoed Wendong's point that Western parents may be more positive and encouraging when interacting with children. She mentioned that many times, she saw little babies feed themselves using their own hands, and parents did not seem to be annoyed by the mess they made and even encouraged them to do that, which was something new to Rachael and maybe also new to many Chinese parents. Tina mentioned what she has observed the relationship between children and parents in Canadian families. She gave an example of children using parents' name to address them in daily life, which might sound impossible in Chinese families, at least in traditional Chinese families with a deep-rooted idea of hierarchical structure in the family.

The information I got from these parents seems to support the belief that there are more similarities than differences between people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, as Eva noted, "one-sided knowledge can lead to a biased view of people from other cultures."

Competencies to be cultivated in children

Before looking into parents' understanding about the functions of education and OST participation, I asked parents to talk about their understanding of competencies. In responding to my question about what competencies they want to cultivate in children in order to meet the requirement of this society, first and foremost, parents mentioned competence in academic learning and bilingualism. Besides, these parents also mentioned competencies such as being

independent and responsible, being able to get along with people, being able to live a quality life, being able to locate resources and being able to make a career of their own. Cathy alone has mentioned the competence to work in a team. Besides, in some other places, my respondents also have touched upon this topic. For example, Laura mentioned about the importance to be able to get along with people.

It was not unexpected that parents stressed the importance of academic learning. Most of the parents believed that the primary task for children at this stage was learning knowledge. And they admitted this belief came from their original cultural traditions and their past experiences. But interestingly, most parents also expressed that they have paid more attention to the learning itself and learning for fun instead of treating children's academic learning as a mark-oriented task. Yulian explained,

> This is partly because we have come to a different culture and partly because the school experience for kids here is much more relaxed. They do not have as many exams as that in China. So I can give attention to kids' real overall development. I allow them to read lots of books including those not directly related to their subject learning in school. I also allow them to play, or try some experiments, like explosives, volcano, I can let them try. Sometimes, I also allow them to try cooking. They can get recipes from web… I admit this culture and things around me can all influence me… if I was living in China now, I guess I could hardly free myself from mundane considerations in Chinese culture, and I will certainly push them in getting good marks. . . . I now do not make strict requirement about their marks on the exam…actually the way they mark students here just doesn't make too much sense to me. But I require them to get hold of the knowledge they are

> supposed to learn. I believe a good academic foundation will benefit them in their future learning and life. (Yulian)

Concerning ability in being bilingual, Eva said, “I feel this is great that kids can be soaked in different cultures. This can infuse a valuable cultural element in his social and lingual competence.” Cathy mentioned that in her childhood, because her family was located on the border of mainland China and Hong Kong, she was able to speak both Mandarin and Cantonese. She said,

> That gave me advantages when interacting with people from mainland China as well as people from Hong Kong. To be bilingual or even multilingual, you have more chances to make friends with people from diverse cultural background and you have good tools to get to know this world. And of course, more jobs will also be available to you. I intentionally stress this point when I educate my kid. I often take my child to the playground in our community, so she will have chances to play with Western kids as well as Chinese kids; they mostly speak English. That is OK. But at home, I always remind her to speak Chinese. (Cathy)

As a matter of fact, Cathy’s practice of carrying out bilingual training was found not rare among these immigrant Chinese families. In the later section on Chinese learning, this topic will be given more details.

Yulian, Tina, Rachael and Yona all expressed the wish that their children could have their own independent career and would be able to make their own living in the future. Laura related this expectation to her observation in her workplace. She mentioned about her two part-time student colleagues working in the same office who are not Chinese. She said,

> The two students in our office, they are part-time, they are very independent, indeed. One is going to law school and another will be moving on to medical school. Actually both of them are from wealthy families. One student has both parents as medical specialists. But since he began his study in the university, he earned all his own tuition. Later his parents moved to U.S., and since then he even worked to cover his own living expenses, like groceries, rent and stuff. So admirable. Another student, his father is working as an officer in the United Nations and his mom never works, she is an artist. As the oldest child in the family, he is almost managing everything by himself. And he is even supporting his younger brother and sister. You do not find many independent kids in China. But over here, it is not rare. The point is, it is not the family that forced them to be so, but they chose to. Because they think the experience is fun and helpful. They told me that. They think that life will be more fun if you live that way… and this makes me think I should raise my kids the same way. And I many times speak to my oldest kid about this. I told her, "I can help you cover all the expenses before you move on to university. But you need to work and earn your own living then." (Laura)

As I know her oldest daughter has already passed her level-10 piano examination, I asked if she could teach to earn some money now. But Laura said that her daughter did not want to, because "she has not experienced any hardship yet. But she will be learning that life lesson if she works a bit in Safeway, a grocery store, in the future. I for sure will make her do that." As a further support for her theory, Laura also added,

> Yes, I wish they can go out to work and earn their own tuition in the future. I always feel if you give them too much, that may not do them as much good. That even can grow in them the feeling of entitlement; they may think they deserve to live that way. I know a

> kid who is already graduated from university and who is still living with his parents and depending on them. He is still depending on the family for his Master's study. He may be good at academic study, but certainly, he lacks the life competence. I mean the ability to make a living. That is not helping with his future life. (Laura)

Selina did not give a direct answer to my question about competence, but she gave a comparison of how parents in two cultures expect from the children concerning their life choice.

> This is my personal understanding… in my original culture, I think the stress is on competencies… that parents want to see their children eventually climb up the social ladder (She used the Chinese idiom *wang zi cheng long*/*wang nv cheng feng*, which literally means to expect to see the son or the daughter to become a dragon or a phoenix—the symbol of being successful). They want to see their children to become the best among the best (The Chinese term *ren shang ren* is used here). Living in this culture (Canadian culture), I want to see them be themselves, or be the one *they* want to be, instead of becoming the one *I* want to see them be… but this is my personal understanding, not necessarily in complete congruence with Canadian values. But I feel the life here, because children can live the way they want to live, because people allow them that freedom, they can choose the life they want to live. It is fine with me if they want to try different things, as long as that does not harm the public interest. They can live the life they want to. (Selina)

Wendong's interpretation about being responsible expanded to a person's responsibility to the society and a person's moral responsibility. He said,

> He first needs to have *liang zhi* (a Chinese word with the connotation of being morally responsible and conscientious), which means you have this ability to tell the right from

> the wrong. This can be manifested in small things; for example, you should be able to help rather than bring trouble to parents. I train my son to be tidy and responsible for his own mess. Every time, after playing toys, I ask him to clean up. Responsibility begins with small things. For another example, I require him to put his stuff in place when he comes back from school. It is not an acceptable behavior if he just throws his stuff somewhere in the room and leaves. Young kids are like young trees, you need to be watchful when they are small or they may grow slanting ways. I think that is fundamental in both cultures, without *liang zhi*, any success is meaningless. It is the core to the sense of responsibility. (Wendong)

Ying's comment also touched upon the moral side of competence. She said,

> I feel in Canadian society they stress morality more than other qualities. That is to say, children should grow up with a proper life attitude, with self-discipline, and with a healthy life. I believe these qualities are important for children. (Ying)

From a different angle Cathy, Wendong and Rachael have talked about the ability of working with people. Wendong said,

> When he is at a young age, the first thing I hope he can learn is how to get along with people around him, including family, friends, and strangers. That is a kind of social competence, very important but takes time. (Wendong)

Cathy's interpretation was, "in this culture, they stress team work. So you need to be open, and be able to communicate well, that is important for developing your people skills."

Parents' understanding and interpretations of competencies gave me the impression that they somewhat confuse the society required competencies with their own expectations, although the two concept can have many overlaps. But this as a matter of fact reveals that these parents are

still in the process of trying to arrive at a convergence between their own interpretations and the reality. In the following, I note down parent' perceptions and comparisons about children's schooling in two cultures.

Parents' perceptions about children's schooling in China and in Canada

In response to my questions "how do you feel about the educational systems in two cultures," and "is there anything you think they can learn from each other?" several perspectives emerged concerning the challenges in supporting children's schooling, the school policy, teacher-student relationship, peer relationship, teacher-parent communication and teaching method. In the end of this section, I also recorded parents' responses to my questions, "how do you define a successful child?" and "is there a model of a successful child in your mind?"

School arrangement

A typical school day in Canada can be in many ways different from what parents have experienced in their childhood. Tina's experience has raised an important point as to how the children's school life can pose big challenge to immigrant parents or parents in general. She said,

> Yeah, it is indeed busy with kids schooling. Here they do not provide lunch in school and kids do not return home for lunch. So every morning I battle to prepare everything for them, clothes, breakfast, snack, and lunch. And very often I have to shout to them for they are always too slow. I do not want them to miss their bus. They have school bus to deliver them to school. Once they get on the school bus, I will give a big breathe in and out. But then I have to rush home to do some preparation for the supper, and even have to begin to think about what to bring for their next lunch. Issues around food have used so much of my brain, I have grown in myself the idea to give up sometimes, but then I have to pump up myself to carry on. That's the life. I remember what Jane Eyre (the main

> figure in the novel written by English writer Charlotte Brontë and published in 1847) has commented about life. Anyway, I have my own work to do, both work and study. Without any time for a break I need to drive to work or university to start another battle… Then they come back around 3:00 pm, this just drives me crazy. Why they need to come home so early? In China, I went to school around 7:00 am and came home around 5:00 pm. How much they can learn within such a short school day, I really doubt. Oh yeah, their philosophy is kids learn through play. But many times, my son told me he was feeling bored at school. But then I have to give him work to do, extra study work, or throw him into some out-of-school time activities, because I cannot let them idle away the time just playing. (Tina)

It happened that Laura has provided an explanation for the short school day in Canadian elementary schools. She said,

> In my kid's school, they have very short recesses and short lunch hour. I feel they do not give kids sufficient time for exercise. So they can get bored and tired quickly. In the elementary schools in China, at least every morning there is time for *ke jian cao* (This is a Chinese term used to refer to the kind of setting-up exercise during the break, mandatory for all students to participate) and *yan bao jian cao* (This is a Chinese term for eye care exercise during recess time) during the break. I believe that arrangements are very scientific. That is something schools here should also adopt. I myself have benefited from doing those exercises. They give your body and your eyes some rest and good exercise, which allows you more energy afterwards. (Laura)

Selina also complained about not having enough exercise for elementary school students in schools. “I always ask the school how much time they let students exercise in the gym or outdoor. I always feel kids need more exercises,” she said.

School learning

Parents’ responses also related to their perception about school learning. Laura has raised an interesting and insightful point in relation to education in both cultures. She maintained that history can cast influence on school learning. Because Canada has only several hundred years of history, compared with over five thousands’ years of history in China,

> Canadian kids do not have to carry the burden of thousands of years of culture in their learning. So they can be more relaxed and have time to concentrate on learning new things through play and exploration. (Laura)

As Laura’s eldest daughter has been an exchange student to France for three months, she also related what she observed from her daughter’s experience when we come to talk about the positive and negative side of educational systems in two cultures. She said,

> What I have mentioned about the concerns in Chinese education can find similar situations in French schools. They also use the kind of duck-feed teaching method. The teacher keeps talking on the stage, which is a traditional type of teaching. Of course, students therefore may learn more and faster, as the teaching is quite structured and duck-feed. I learned that what they teach in Grade 9 is even more than what we teach in Grade 10 in Canada. But I really doubt if children can learn that much. About this…because when my daughter went there, she was a Grade 9 student. I have mentioned that in France, their Grade 9 teaches what we learn over here in schools Grade 10 knowledge. I was really worried about her. In fact, at the beginning, because of the language barrier,

> she did not do too well in math tests. But after several months, she ripped off the top place in math tests. And the teacher even told her that she would be a mathematician. But this confused me a bit. Because they have boasted that they teach more and students learn faster… this on the other hand, makes me think children over here, although they play a lot, they can really learn things… and my daughter told me, I cannot believe she was able to think that deep, she said, through this experience, "I began to appreciate the educational system in Canada more than before. We enjoy learning in schools over here." In France, students look at their teachers with awe, just like in Chinese schools. It is rare that teachers will interact with students and treat them like friends. Sometimes, teachers here even come to you and chat with you. This is rare in French schools or in Chinese schools. Students fear teachers there. (Laura)

Rantel made such an interesting comment about schooling in China that, "sometimes I am thinking what if Steve Jobs was born in China and received schooling in China. I believe a prankster like him could hardly survive in Chinese schools. And Apple would thus never come into existence, right?" Laura's comment on Chinese education somewhat supported Rantel's belief. She said,

> I feel that Chinese schools pay much attention on basic skills training. This has a good side. But its problem lies in that they use the same pattern to train all children, regardless of children's talents. Whether you have talent or not, the teachers ask every kid do those same piles of exercises, so eventually, every child turns out to be almost the same unless the child is incurably stupid. (Laura)

From another angle, Cathy has given learning in Canadian schools her interpretation. She said,

> Learning here does not focus on academic learning. In China, they feed in kids all kinds of knowledge. Chinese kids have to learn all subjects, English as well, and even more than that. Kids have to go to those programs after school for extra learning. But here, they give kids lots of time to play. Kids learn and at the same time they get enough play. That is to say, kids learn from play. They foster, not feed those knowledge in kids. But this has something to do with culture and people. Canadians, they do not possess this state of mind for fierce competition. (Cathy)

Influence of cultural values and moral aspect of school education

Cultural values cast influence in various aspects of people's lives, including children's school education. In the following, I have put down my respondents' reflections on the influence of cultural values. It is worth mentioning the phenomenon noticed by Selina. She said,

> What is the use of comparing this with that? It seems to me that all the talented Chinese swarmed towards IT field. Oh yeah, finance as well. I really feel it is necessary to reevaluate some of our cultural values that Chinese schools pass on to children and their parents. (Selina)

Yulian's view somewhat echoed Selina's point. She said,

> I sometimes also think through these questions myself, about good or not so good aspect of school systems in two cultures. I find that, through many people's experiences, the subjects they chose to learn were actually their parents' decisions. The things they do are just for the honour of the family or for the honour of their schools, not out of their own personal interest. The Chinese schools instill in parents about what are practical choices and what can help children earn a better future. That kind of practical thinking is not rare among Chinese parents. And teachers and parents will be very proud if their students or

> kids are in IT or in banking field. Even if you are more talented in linguistics, the school climate, the family climate, or even the broader social climate, will not encourage that. (Yulian)

As a comparison, Eva looked at another side of the same issue. Earlier, Eva mentioned her husband laughing at some of the Canadian university students' poor math; she then said,

> That is really too uncommon to us. But, I also see many excellent students among Westerners. My general impression is, if they have interest in writing or art, they can go further down the road. They can be very committed to their personal pursuit. Actually they have this educational system that encourages kids to develop their personal interest, that is why they have made effort to specify. . . . like there is science school, and there is French immersion. . . . I just want to say, they provide various choices to kids. (Eva)

Often my respondents linked the influence of values with the moral aspect of school education. These respondents' views related to the moral aspect of school education demonstrate divergence in interpretations and perspectives. Wendong gave a profound comment on the negative side of the Chinese education. He reflected,

> There are many social problems now in China, which to great degree reflect the failure of Chinese education. The distortion of people's values, the pursuit of fame and power, many family tragedies, bazaar and strange sights, I sometimes can hardly believe all these happen in a country with the longest history of civilization. We have to ask, what kind of people Chinese educational system are producing—maybe people with beautiful marks on the paper, or people who can bring pride to the family, but people without a healthy mind, and eventually, that messed-up mind leads to a messed-up world view and life. The

> forty years of China's opening to the outside world, how much conscientiousness has been lost at the same time. (Wendong)

Wendong's words were thoughtful in a way that he pointed out a critical issue that is challenging the educational practice in China and maybe in many other countries as well, which is that the achievement in the academic performance may be gained at the cost of moral and mental health aspects of education. As a counter argument, Eva stressed the Chinese school seemed to take greater responsibility in children's moral education. She mentioned,

> I do not know if you have ever heard about this. Many Chinese parents often say to the teachers or the school "I am now handing kids over to school," which has the implication that school will teach them knowledge of all kinds, including how to become a good person and a useful person in the world. So at home, parents mainly supervise them doing their homework. But over here, it seems to me that school doesn't teach them the principles (or doctrines for another translation) to be a person of good virtue. All this work thus is placed on parents' shoulders. So comparatively, Chinese parents in China do not need to exhaust themselves in repeating and teaching kids those principles again. (Eva)

Eva mentioned about the issue of moral education in Western schools. She recalled that someone has raised the point that in schools in Western countries, "they teach knowledge but not moral knowledge." She said,

> The reason of such a view comes from the popular belief that Westerners encourage free will. That is to say, some kids, they obviously are not good, but teachers are still encouraging them to follow their will. About this, some Westerners also raised objection… once it mentioned in the CBC news that parents were roundtable discussing

> why we cannot allow failure in schools, because many people actually questioned about this. For example, some kids cannot do simple addition when they are already in grade three. And then they move on to grade four and they of course cannot do multiplication. But schools say they respect kids' will and let them move on to higher grades. The gap between these kids and other kids can only become wider, right? Why do not you just let them remain in the same grade for one or more years? Or like what Chinese schools do, to instill in these kids some of the valuable life philosophy… We all know from very young age that, "If you work at it hard enough, you can grind an iron bar into a fine needle (Here she borrowed the Chinese saying *zhi yao gong fu shen , tie chu mo cheng zhen*)." About those stories we learned at young age are actually good moral lessons for children. We learned from textbooks, and we also learned from teachers. If you put your feet on the edge of the table, you will be told that is not the right school behavior. But if the same thing happens in the school here, they may think that is your freedom. Teachers do not seem to care about it. Teachers may think they are teaching knowledge and they respect kids that way. But in my opinion, rights or respect, that is an excuse. (Eva)

But again I found disagreement in some other parents' comments. Some parents mentioned that teachers in the Canadian schools provided good moral examples, because "they are professional." Tina also talked about some good school events such as Terry Fox Run, saying that "such events can certainly teach kids good moral lessons."

Questioning about school policy

Some respondents' comments related to their children's schooling revealed their concerns about school policy as well. Yulian, for example, raised a point about how she thought about some school policies based on her personal experience. She mentioned that when she was volunteering

in a classroom in her son's school, she noticed they placed a child sitting by himself in the front, having some distance from the rest of the children. She was feeling uncomfortable to see that at the time. But it was only later on that her son told her that he made friends with this singled-out child, she started to worry.

> I do not quite understand why they place that kid in the front. If this happens in China, people will generally think that kid is not good. Maybe he has violated some school rules, or maybe he did not listen to the teacher. So he deserved that treatment. But when I raised this concern at teacher-parent conference, they tried to avoid giving me more information about the child because of the privacy issue. But my child was telling me he and this kid have become friends. I thought I have the right to learn more about this kid. But the teachers just told me that kid has no problem and he is a good kid. This is just an arrangement for kids with special needs. But they did not tell me what kind of special needs are, because that kid looks physically healthy… How can I stop worrying? I have no choice but tell my kid to stay away from him… Later my son told me this kid kept coming up to him to kiss him, which really bothered him. I had to talk to the teacher again. They probably did something and had a talk with that kid. But I cannot feel safe to leave my child in that school. (Yulian)

Concern about school policy was also found to be embedded in Eva's understanding of the "GATE program" for gifted learners in Canada. She shared her opinions by saying,

> About GATE program, it has something to do with its general policy of popularizing education to meet the goal of "no child left behind." That means, they want all kids including poor kids to reach the level required as appropriate for a certain age. That is great. But on the other side, I heard about a report which says for over twenty years,

> Canada has been gradually lowering its standards in general, because they do not want any child to fail in school. In order to assure all kids can pass, they have to lower the standards. Kids of lower performance can also try to catch up. But learning ability various, that is obvious. This, I can say, represents a main issue for the Canadian educational system. Many local Canadian parents also expressed their worries. Now come back to what I have explained about "GATE program." So there are some kids who are at the middle or above level. They can learn faster than other kids. If you keep lowering your standards, this will lead to a lack of challenge to those faster learners. They will lose interest in learning in schools. One mom, her daughter will move on to grade seven. She was advised by the school teacher to place her daughter in GATE program. But she was not too sure whether she should go for it. So I suggested she do that and explained about my understanding of the GATE program. She said she did not think about that before, but she felt her son's school experience confirmed my reasoning. Her son always complained to her that school was boring and he almost lost interest to go to school. (Eva)

Making friends in school

In the section above about school policy, I have included information regarding parents' concern of their kids making friends in school. Some parents also touched upon the topic of making friends in school from another angle, about which I did not raise specific questions. For example, Eva talked about the difficulty for his son to make friends in school, partly because the family does not live in the residential area where the school locates. She said,

> It is hard for him to make friends in school. He has some friends, but not too close friends. We do not live in that school area. Other families, when the school is over,

> parents and their kids can stay at the playground for a while. But my kid, and his personality… It is not easy to arrange a play-date, because we do not live close. And besides, I rarely have chances to meet other parents. I go to his school only in the early morning and late afternoon after work. This is a situation unique to my family, and this certainly has some influence on kid. So whenever they invite us to their party, I will try my best to take him there. But still, making friends need time to stay together. That may pose challenge to immigrant families like us. We want to choose a good school but we cannot afford to live there. (Eva)

What can schools in two cultures learn from each other?

In fact the previous points about schools in two cultures already touched upon many aspects of schooling including the strength and weakness of the educational systems. Yet when I brought up the question, "do you think there is anything the educational systems in two cultures can learn from each other?" parents in this study come up with more points. According to immigrant Chinese parents in the study, the positive sides of Canadian schooling are reflected in its effort to open students' minds to the larger outside world, to encourage creativeness and the spirit for innovation in students, to foster affection toward diverse communities and people, and allow students a relaxed learning environment. These are all the things Chinese schools can learn from Canadian schools. Selina's comment was very insightful. She said,

> The type of education carried out in my childhood, may be referred to as aptitude education (She used the Chinese term *zi zhi jiao yu*). It stressed the academic performance. And it stressed to foster obedience in kids. So kids wouldn't question and they would be committed to striving for good marks in all subjects learning. But over here, they truly give more attention to quality education (She used the Chinese term *su*

> *zhi jiao yu*). I mean, they recognize uniqueness. For example, some kids can be strong in leadership and some others can be good followers or working partners. Kids therefore develop their unique personalities. Diversity thus is encouraged. This is maybe due to the fact that Canada is a multicultural society. In their learning environment, kids have chances to come in contact with multicultural and multiethnic groups of people. Just to take a look at my neighbours, they are at least from five or six ethnicities. In schools, kids also come from diverse background. Their religion, their faith, their skin colour, and their mother languages are so different. But all these kids can mingle together and they mingle well. They make friends with each other. They study in the same classroom. Kids in this way learn to recognize other cultures different from their own. (Selina)

Well, that was not the end of Selina's comment. In a dialectic way, she then talked about what Canadian schools can learn from Chinese culture,

> Well, in Canada, they encourage uniqueness. But kids are kids. When they are young, they sometimes need…it is understandable that they do not come to agree with some rules, or the right way of doing things. They do not come to realize the importance of those things right away. So I believe at the right time, parents need to set up certain rules to frame their behavior. Besides, they need lots of training to help them lay a solid basic foundation. In China, kids are required to do lots of repeated work at school, like exercises in their subject learning. Moreover, because they have infinite potentials… the so-called learning actually is also a kind of play, just that we call it "learning." So kids are learning, and playing, that can happen at the same time. But there should be rules, so their playing will not go out of control. For young kids in particular, they need obedience to a certain degree. (Selina)

But school systems in Canada are certainly not perfect. One thing of consensus among these immigrant Chinese parents concerning the weak side of Canadian schools lies in its not so strong basic skills training. As Eva and Laura mentioned, they found that "math is particularly weak in Canadian school teaching." Eva mentioned that her husband joked about the weak math ability among many Canadian university students and he said, "they could not even do quadratic equation problems, that's ridiculous." In addition, Laura said,

> As I have mentioned, schooling is enjoyable in Canada and they pay sufficient attention to enrich kids' experiential learning needs. That is to say, they have done a quite good job to link learning with social life reality. But other than that, I always feel they should strengthen the aspect of laying a good foundation for basic skills. You see, they (some local Canadians) are so bad at math. Those simple math problems, we Chinese can work out quickly in our mind, but they have to use calculator. They really need to do more work to improve in this respect. (Laura)

Contrary to most of the parents' views on weak math training in Canadian school, Rantel attributed her son' accomplishment to the inquisitive teaching method used by the math teacher in her son's school after the child pulled off the first place in math exam in the provincial test in his Canadian school. She said,

> They are lucky. They have a very good math teacher. She used the method that makes math such a fun and beautiful work to do, which really engages kids in learning further. She also recommends many good books, for example, *Amazing Math*, that is a very good book, kids will not feel bored doing math problems that way. (Rantel)

From another angle, Cathy talked about how she thought about teachers' commitment to their roles. Her comment somewhat surprised me. She said,

> They do need to focus more on strengthening the academic side of learning. A little more focus can have better results. Compared with teachers in schools in China, I think teachers here are not very responsible. In China, no matter how much grey or hidden income you earn outside of school, and no matter what happens behind your back, at least there is a belief accepted by all that teachers hold a very noble career and they are very important in the cause of educating the country's future citizen. But over here in Canada, they do not seem to attach to this belief. They stress that teachers have human rights and you have to guarantee they live a happy life. So you cannot expect their commitment derives from a superordinate goal… They will question why you want them to make sacrifices to the cause of education…in China, at least on the table, we can see that people value education to such an extent that everyone believes teachers should commit to their role to match this expectation… but on the other hand, I heard they cut the education budget again. What a tragedy for teachers in Canada! (Cathy)

Chinese side of schooling has its strength, but it can also learn a lot from Canadian side. Laura said,

> The creativeness is encouraged in schools over here. I think the progress in anything, first and foremost condition is creativity… my belief is there are only things you cannot think of, there are no things you cannot do. I think the traditional way of education, like what is in China and France, impede, or even kill this spirit of creativeness. This also explains why there are so many smart Chinese, and lots of Chinese are on the top of the achievement on one hand, but not many creative and outstanding inventions on the other hand… why many advanced technology can be found in Western world… I feel Chinese school education doesn't foster this spirit of creativeness effectively. (Laura)

Eva, having revealed about her concerns about moral education and weak basic skills training in Canadian schools, also expressed her appreciation of Canadian education in terms of its strength in fostering creativity and encouraging personal interests, which creates a climate for further exploration and deeper understanding of a particular subject. Besides, she also added a comment about the varieties of school choice. She said,

> The good side about Canadian educational system also lies in that they give you many choices, like immersion schools, charter schools, public schools, Catholic schools. And they also have very specified schools like science schools and sports schools. Faster learners then are sent to some institutions that may be good for their learning. They then cluster together. Another problem that comes up to my mind is kids that are not at average level but at a higher level can find it difficult to make friends as well… GATE program, however, is not the kind of gifted program in our understanding. It is set up only to meet the needs of kids who learn faster and better. (Eva)

Parents' views about successful children in two cultures

To be noted, I did not give a definition of success, because that was my point of finding out how these parents were going to define it. It turned out that this concept caused confusion and divergence of interpretations. While respondents' definitions of success varied, responses to my question about perceptions of successful children in China reached a consensus that in China children who can excel in academic studies are always looked up as being successful. For example, Eva commented on Chinese successful children. She said,

> As far as I know, in China, academic excellence is the only standard for a successful child. About other aspects… in my time, I remember, drawing, physical exercises all were considered as a waste of time. At least people in my community had that kind of

> prejudiced thought. But now, I feel that belief was outdated and narrow-minded. I think Chinese educational system has its strength. For example, it can help kids build up good study habits, and it can foster ability in learning. But it does no good job in fostering children's creativity. In Chinese educational system, the standard used to judge a child being successful or not is whether he listens to the teacher's instruction, whether he is doing what the teacher asks him to do. So he may be excellent in taking exams and he may get good marks. But when he is doing all this, he is losing other things, like doing things creatively. (Eva)

Cathy also added that, "being good at some sort of sport may be also considered important for successful children in China."

On the other hand, several perspectives emerged in relation to parents' understandings of a successful child in Canada, which again reflected a learning process that immigrant parents are going through in an unfamiliar cultural environment different from the one they were raised in. For example, immediately after commenting on the Chinese kind of successful children, Eva offered her opinion about how learning environment in Canadian schools affected her definition of a successful child. She said,

> But over here, I feel, because they do not have many exams in the elementary school, the learning environment is rather relaxed. When it comes to judging a kid… for example, from the report card, you can tell if the kid has received good marks. But then, you can also see that their judgment of a kid, they look at many things besides academic performance. So learning in this environment relieves the pressure of striving for good marks. So that also frees parents from that pressure to some extent and allows them to focus on meaningful things in children's overall development and education. So kids then

> can go after their personal interest. A successful child, to tell you the truth, I now do not have that desire that my kid has to be successful. As what I have mentioned before, my understanding now is, as long as he can be independent and able to make decisions independently and responsibly, I think that is a success. So I expect him to pursue his passion and to be able to manage any consequences incurred from that pursuit, and keep going on this road until reaching that… I believe this is a great success. (Eva)

What has come to my attention was that some parents such as Eva, Rachael, and Yulian have acknowledged that their interpretation of success has infused in many of their life experiences and personal understandings of the meanings those experiences brought to them. Yulian was trying to answer a philosophical question about what is success. She said,

> I want to ask 'What is success?' Sometimes success can be rather simple, like winning a game, getting a good mark in the exam, or making a good friend, or even just to think about that we are able to come to Canada, that is a success. However, success is also a very complicated concept. Is fortune or fame success? Or high social status? I cannot tell. Money or fame, most people believe that is success and they work after that. But the problem is "Where is the end?" I think what we need to see is just a status of life, that is, whether it satisfies your own needs. If you compare yourself with others, there is always someone who lives better than you. But, even when you work up to CEO's position, I still have to question if that is successful. What I want to say is that to become a CEO, you actually sacrifice a lot of things in your life. Because success costs… Unless he can make a good balance of life. But still, if you have to use a frame to define success, that is to say, you think success is a fixed definition, at least, I will not do that now. So for kids,

> if they can make a living by themselves, they have certain financial foundation and they have their own career. I will say they are successful. (Yulian)

In line with this thought, Ying's interpretation of a successful child has taken into consideration the social and cultural realities of Canadian society. She said,

> but in this culture and society, this is not the case. Because their systems are constructed in a way that even you are a university graduate, or even you have got doctorate degree, you are not necessarily well paid. I feel over here it is relatively easier to balance your life needs, because your life choice is usually respected. If you do not want to go to university. . . . I mean, because over here the measure of your life success is not necessarily the money, but your life status, which means whether you are satisfied with your life or whether you are able to live the life you want to live. . . . at least here I feel there is no huge gap between the life quality of the rich and the poor. . . . (Ying)

Rachael, to a certain extent, also echoed Yulian's view. She said,

> I do not want to see her become anyone but herself. I just want to see her happy and know how to find happiness. This is my ultimate goal in her education. But that does not mean happiness is the only important thing for her. When she grows up, she will encounter many obstacles and difficulties. But she needs to know how to maintain a positive attitude when confronting adversities. Only in that way, she can truly feel happy. (Rachael)

When I asked if she can define this true feeling of happiness as a sign of success, she disagreed and stated that success and happiness are two different concepts, but happiness is built on the success or happiness can be achieved without success. Later on she added, "we can view happiness as part of the success, because if she possesses a healthy spirit and she can use a

positive attitude to face any life adversities, I think that is also a kind of success." Interestingly, her final comment was,

> I just do not like this word "success." This word carries an implication that you have to rely on others to evaluate your work or pursuit; they are using their standards, not your standards. But you may not agree with their judgment of your "success." If you find your own internal tranquility and you live a happy life, then you have a happy ending in your life. (Rachael)

As I hoped to clarify my understanding, I asked her to explain further why she needs to think about other people's standards when defining success. She said,

> Because I was raised up in such a tradition that my parents were very strict with my study and they did not think happiness is important. Especially my mom, she considered the pursuit of material happiness like eating and playing reflects a person's poor life taste. And she believed these things are no good at all. So the kind of education they gave me was that I should sacrifice my happiness to satisfy their standard of being successful. But that success is measured by using their or other people's standards; they decide your value. But this does not make the kid happy. To a kid, happiness is the most important of all things. (Rachael)

When I asked if they had a model of a successful child in mind, to my interest, instead of mentioning some one that was up there as an ideal, all the models my respondents mentioned were close to their real life. For example, Laura has told me about the reaction of her second child to her sister's accomplishment (her sister excelled in playing piano and in her academic study) and her motivation to surpass the sister. Without doubt sibling can serve as a good role

model. Cathy said she herself could serve as a successful model for her daughter. Ying mentioned one of her school fellows,

> As far as I can remember, I knew one of my school fellows. He was not the top student, but he was very popular, because he was very mature, and was able to solve any problem in a calm way. He was so popular in the school. I believe people like him can live a happier life than those top students. He was a good model, very positive and helpful. (Ying)

Selina mentioned her friend's child:

> I sometimes also talked to those moms, especially boys' moms. I heard about this successful kid, the so-called… or a good kid. He was said to be able to keep his interest in learning. I mean he takes initiatives in learning. I believe this is because when he was young, his parents offered him plenty of chances to go to various activities, plus lots of freedom, so he can keep up to his interest, and because his parents did not intentionally pull him up to help him grow (here she used a Chinese idiom *ba miao zhu zhang* which tells a story about a farmer who was impatient to see the slow growth of the seedlings and so he pulled them up to help them grow). Unlike this kid, I also learned about some other kids, who even have reached their PhD, but said they had no interest in learning anymore. Parents using pressure on kids may see opposite result. (Selina)

To a certain extent, Selina's words suggested the important link between parents' childrearing strategies and fostering of a successful child, about which I intend to explore further in the following topic of experiences associated with children's participation in OST activities.

Experiences associated with children's participation in out-of-school (OST) activities

In this part of data and interpretation, I have grouped ideas under these topics, namely, strategies for cultivating competence in children, parents' childhood OST experiences, Parents' awareness of the OST resources in Canada, OST activity arrangement for children, and parents' perceptions and pragmatic concerns about OST participation.

Strategies for cultivating competence in children

Before I move on to specific topics about OST participation, I put down here parents' responses to my question "what strategies you can use to cultivate their competencies in two cultures?" This question was actually raised right after my question about their understanding and interpretation of important competencies in two cultures. However, I feel it is logical to learn about parents' self-reported strategies in the first place, and to examine if it is in congruence with their practices afterwards.

In fact, the participating parents have given me some thoughts related to this question in some other places. For example, they mentioned that playing musical instrument could foster traits and qualities necessary in strengthening academic competence. Besides, Laura has talked about planning to give her daughter some life skills training (e.g., to work to earn her tuition) to build up in the child the ability to make her own living in the future. In Cathy's case, she has mentioned about exposing her child to different groups of people in order to help the child grow language competence. Also, Wendong has expressed the view that training in daily life skills could be helpful in building up responsibility in children. In an earlier comment, Cathy also mentioned about important competencies such as to be able to team work, to be open and to be able to communicate well. In response to my question about strategies to develop these competencies, Cathy added,

> It is important to step outside your home, to see with your own eyes the world. It is also important to have a wide variety of interests, about which you can try different programs, programs based on interests. . . . that can provide you opportunities to come in contact with more things. . . . then you can decide what exactly meet your interest. But that does not mean I am against a simple life, with less desires. That also works, just that it is better not to shut yourself up from the real world and build air castles in your room (here she used a Chinese idiom *bi men zao che*, which literally means to shut oneself up in a room making a cart or carry out one's idea irrespective of external circumstances). You need to be willing to go to the library, to read, to play with other kids at playground or else. Play helps. You need to be open, so you will not act blindly. But…(Cathy)

She used a transitional word here to switch her talk to comparing the function and purpose of children's participation in OST programs in two cultures.

> Based on my observation, I can see that in Canada, they provide kids lots of programs with various purposes. But the primary purpose is to enrich their life. Comparatively, Chinese kids have to work long hours on their academic study, they almost have no time for their own. And the thing is, the extracurricular activities for Chinese kids in China, have become a must, an enhancer, and a means to beat others (in all kinds of competitions). The purpose is not to enrich or entertain, nor to let kids play. . . . it turns out that if you can play piano. . . . people will say, wow, that kid is really something, or that kid is up to certain levels of piano playing. (Cathy)

Cathy has suggested a good point here that even using the same strategy in cultivating children's competencies, the function of the strategy can change in order to serve different purposes, so does the effect of the strategy. Selina happened to express a similar thought.

> I heard many Chinese parents are exhausting themselves taking kids to all kinds of supplementary learning programs, like English, math, Chinese, science. They register kids in many *bu xi ban* (This is a Chinese term for extra lessons in after school hours). And kids, based on my observation, some of them can carry out what parents expect them to do. And they are doing very good jobs. But many other kids, they are tired of such busy arrangement; they feel upset. But they dare not to say or do anything to upset their parents. I feel this is actually suppressing kids' nature. (Selina)

Instead, Selina put a stress on the parents' role. She said,

> What I am thinking is that, we cannot just rely on the schools or the extracurricular activities. I believe parents play a bigger role. That means, first, you yourself need to have interest in lots of things, have passion for yet-to-be-discovered, have willingness to participate, even when you are not sure or do not know too much yourself. I think you as parents have greater influence on your kids. (Selina)

Ying also rendered her support of Selina's thought about parents' role in cultivating children's competencies.

> It is not easy to reach a fine-tuned *du* (The Chinese word she used here literally means limit, range, extent, or degree. . . . because I came from a background that almost in every way different from my current life. I will not spoil my child. But if I do not push her in her study, I know she will never push herself. And because she is young, she has no idea, she has no life experience, and she will not know what is in the future for her. . . . If she knows that, she probably will take some initiatives in her study. I believe parents, Chinese or not, have to take a role in this matter. (Ying)

> From Selina and Ying's words, I sensed an important message that, after all, strategies such as OST activities or school activities are tools. The chance to optimize the use of these tools actually lies with the activator or operator such as parents. This greatly reinforces the significance of this study. In the following section, I will take a look at parents' childhood OST experiences first before moving on to their arrangement for their children.

Parents' childhood OST experiences

Data about parents' childhood OST experience was gained at the same time I collected background information related to socio-demographics and parents' childhood experiences. Out of the consideration that from time to time I can make comparisons with how these parents made arrangement for their children and understand their evolving thought related to OST experiences, I feel it more proper to single out the part of data from my original arrangement and include it here. When talking about OST activities parents were once involved in, I have gotten a general impression that my respondents who were raised in the cities or towns had more chances to engage in supervised or unsupervised OST activities mostly arranged by the school, than those who grew up in the countryside, who probably were more raised up in a way called "natural accomplishment of growth" as described in Lareau's (2011) *Unequal childhoods*. But all in all, their childhood OST experience benefited them in many ways.

Yulian, Cathy, Rachael, Yani and Wendong all reported that they once engaged in some kind of afterschool OST activities, supervised as well as unsupervised. Wendong stated that he used to be a very active member of many afterschool programs such as soccer, chess and drawing. And he also mentioned, "at that time in China, there were no programs in the form of clubs, like what now see in Canada. There were only school-based programs usually happening

after regular school hours, and, often once a week." Cathy used to have great interest in joining afterschool programs, especially the electronic group when she was in the elementary and junior high school. She recalled that once for a while she and several other students would cluster in a small room full of discarded components from radios or TVs or other electronics after school. The teachers only showed up occasionally and provided some advice when being sought after. She recalled:

> I was good at disassembling those radios, but not good at assembling them. So most of the time, they only allowed me to stand on the side and watch them assembling. I remember two students from higher grades. They were really smart kids; they knew a lot about physics. I was often amazed to see how they could fix those disabled electronics, like magicians. I even kept one of their products at home, a radio, naked without a back, haha. (Cathy)

Yulian recalled she was benefitting a lot from joining the afterschool activities. Her interest in biology was greatly attributed to her OST experiences in her childhood. She said,

> I liked learning biology a lot. I have to attribute this to my experience of growing mushrooms in my junior high school. I forget why I joined that biology group. But I remember our teacher always came up with good ideas, like making bookmarks by using maple leaves. So that year when I was in junior high school, we began to grow mushrooms after class, just outside those teachers' office. We were provided with bags and bags of discarded cotton seeds and shells mixed with sawdust by the nearby farmers for growing mushrooms. I was proud of myself because the teachers assigned the most important job to me. I was responsible for culture the fungal spores. When removing the spores from the lab tube, in order to prevent bacterial contamination, I remember we used

> alcoholic burner, which you can find in the chemical labs. That needs great care and patience. I was the only one who succeeded every time. Other people's culture always had the problem of bacterial contamination. We later sold the mushrooms to teachers at a very low price. I was so obsessed with our mushrooms that every day right after class I would run to see if the mushrooms come out. They can grow really fast…Because of this experience, I later became so interested in biology and I never felt bored learning it. Good marks were also a bonus side product thereafter. I even think about growing mushrooms at home many times. I sure will also do this with my kids. (Yulian)

I can tell from Cathy and Yulian's experiences that an OST activity that is to the children's heart content could so effectively ignite in them the passion for learning and foster the sense of responsibility in a natural way. As a contrast, Yona and Laura's childhood experiences were quite different. Growing up in the countryside, Laura said she loved to be in touch with nature, because she used to spend so much of her afterschool time playing in the river and in the forest of Japanese Banana trees along the river. And that life also left some influence on her personality. She described herself as the little leader of a league of small kids, she said,

> They followed me every day, even the big kids. I guess because I always could come up with some good ideas about play. We always have lots of kids play together, life was very *re nao* (the Chinese word she used here does not have a good match in English, but I explain it as "excited, fun and full of noise"). (Laura)

Eva was also brought up in the countryside, but she said she did not have much time to do things other than help in the field. And besides, she was treated in such a way that all the family expected highly of her in terms of academic success. So in the summer or winter breaks, she usually spent much of her time teaching herself new things that teachers had not taught her.

Different from all other respondents' perspective, Selina shared her experience and perspective. She said,

> In my childhood, I do not remember there were kind of activities that could be strictly called *ke wai huo dong* (Please refer to the literature review about Chinese interpretation of OST activities). Kids were just like playing freely and wildly (here she used a Chinese term *fang yang* which literally means letting sheep out to pasture). And at the time, the school work was relatively light, so kids had lots of time to play. The kinds of play we usually did were actually self-invented sport games, such as playing balls, kicking the shuttlecock, jumping the elastic bands, rolling hoops, tossing sandbags, playing with slingshot and playing marbles, and many more. I believe these games have benefited us a lot and gave us great fun time. But I feel over here, they seem to stress the difference between girls and boys. The kind of sports they are promoting, including the extracurricular activities they choose, seem to me that they are very conscious of what are appropriate for girls and what are appropriate for boys. They intentionally guide boys and girls to different directions. But of course, this is just my personal observation. In my childhood, if I was a boy, and if I was limited to play only boys' stuff, I probably would not be able to enjoy myself to my heart's content. Over here, they use different sports for boys and girls, maybe for the purpose of fostering appropriate dispositions. (Selina)

Selina's comment reminded me that OST activities in Canadian culture may be also used intentionally to serve the function of instilling sex appropriate message in parents and children. On the other hand, it is also a good question for the OST program designers to consider as to how the quality program can effectively integrate children's creative thinking to make OST time a truly fun time for them.

Parents' awareness of the OST resources in Canada

As I was trying to find out if immigrant parents know what they need to know about OST programs, I asked respondents whether they were aware of the OST resources around and where they found OST resources. Most of the parents reported that they took initiatives to reach possible resources. The most often used tools to search for OST programs include web search for programs supported by City of Calgary or simply using Internet search engine such as Google search, newsletters or flyers from the community or school, as well as communicating with other parents.

Laura has a very active character, which is reflected in the fact that she has been involved in the community events frequently and voluntarily. And as a matter of fact, she is the parent who has exposed her children to the highest number of OST activities. This is somewhat consistent with the conclusion reached by the Shubert Center for Child Studies (SCCS, 2007) that children whose parents are involved in community volunteering action are more likely to participate in OST activities. According to Laura, she did not spare particular time collecting OST resources, instead, those wanted information just came to her handily. For example, Laura joined a dance team in the community center every week, and thus she got a chance to interact with many mothers. Through chatting with those mothers, Laura exchanged with them the useful information on varieties of learning and activity resources for children. She remarked, "resources are infinite; you can find more if you have more time to interact with people."

In Eva's case, she said she did not follow other parents' footsteps in choosing activities for her children. And she learned about some of the useful information on unexpected occasions. For example, once she happened to encounter a woman on the train and as they started to chat Eva learned that her husband was a piano teacher. So she ventured to ask if the women's

husband could try to teach her child. Luckily, I learned that, the child was accepted and have been learning piano from the teacher since then. She explained that, because she always kept in mind the principles of arranging proper OST activities for her children, she took initiatives in seeking out chances.

> Although I wasn't familiar with the resources about OST activities, I had in my mind a principle that I would arrange my kids to do three things: playing a musical instrument, participating in a sport program, plus learning Chinese. Now I also have some other ideas. I overheard some parents saying that you do not have to be very selective with the first teacher. But when kids are up to a certain level, the second teacher has to be pretty well in his specialized field. I do not need to worry about him this early because kids are still small. But just that when the time comes, where should I find this second teacher? Oh, maybe it should not be that difficult since we can use the advanced technology to search for good resources we need. And I can also get useful information from other moms if I need to. (Eva)

Interestingly Eva's working principle of arranging three things for her children seems to work with other parents as well in this study, which is a phenomenon worthy of my further attention and pondering. That aside, when I prompted the question as to whether they knew anything about those youth organizations, Selina said she heard about some non-profit organizations running some programs with low charge and with very committed volunteers. But her main source of information on children's OST activities was the library. Ying and Eva had experiences of enrolling their children in some programs run by YWCA. But Ying stated,

> I know YWCA and went to some of its programs for kids. My impression is that they provide only some basic level programs, like swimming, same with programs by the city.

> I did some visits. They meet the basic level, which means their main purposes are for popularizing some of the programs and for children to kill their time. But those programs are not suitable for kids any more if they have already reached a certain level and need further training. (Ying)

When Asked if they ever heard about organizations like Youth Achievement whose focus is on fostering business mind out of kids, Eva told me that several years ago she even once volunteered in that organization and offered some teaching on basic financial terms to youth. But interestingly she never thought about sending her own kids to that program.

It should be noted that most of the respondents even never heard about the youth organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H clubs, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Girl Guides, etc., not to mention to even think about sending their children to those programs provided by these youth organizations. I have to admit that, if not for this research, I may be just as ignorant about these youth organizations as those parents, but on the other hand, resources about OST programs are abundant nowadays. Without distinctive qualitative programs and without effective promotional strategies to new-comers, it can be expected that youth organizations may not be as competitive in the "market" as private organizers or municipal organizers. But still this also means these youth programs have a big space to expand if they want to share part of the "market."

OST activity arrangement for preschool age children

In this part, I have recorded data relating to these of my questions: What out of school activities are your children engaged in? Why did you enroll them in those programs? Do you think some of the programs are more important than other programs?

Table 10 OST Activity arrangement for preschool age children

Children	*Participation in activities provided by outside resources*
Wendong's son	Swimming
Yulian's son	Skating; swimming
Rante's son	Drawing
Yona's son	Learning violin; skating
Selina's son	Drawing
Eva's son	Learning piano; swimming; skating
Rachael's daughter	Learning piano; drawing; dancing
Yani's daughter	Dancing; learning Chinese
Laura's daughter	Learning piano; dancing; drawing; swimming
Tina's daughter	Learning zither; Dancing
Ying's daughter	Learning piano; dancing
Cathy's daughter	Drawing; dancing

Source: Data from the first interview

Table 10 shows that regardless of economic and life challenges, most of the families encountered in the first years of their immigration settlement experience, parents still engaged their children in this or that kind of activities or programs, mostly concentrated in arts and sports, although most of the parents felt this was a very tiring task to take children to the lessons and cost for the activities was also one of the main factors to consider.

Table 10 shows that 5 children were taking sports lessons (e.g., swimming, skating), 10 children were taking art lessons (e.g., learning a musical instrument, dancing, drawing), and

some children were taking more than two programs at this young age. About learning Chinese, only one child has been admitted into Chinese school because of the age requirement. But all parents expressed their wish to send their children to learn Chinese in the near future. And interestingly, all girls were taking classical Chinese dancing lessons. When, out of curiosity, I prompted the question as to why they did not consider pop dance, four of my respondents explained that, "because pop dance does not seem as decent and elegant." For another example, Rachael mentioned because she thought through dancing practice girls' body movement would appear more elegant, which could help build an internal disposition that is good for girls.

Interestingly, in addition to formal lessons and programs from outside resources, parents also mentioned other activities they themselves and their children were engaged in, like running, camping, travelling, gardening, reading, and so on. Selina said because her preschool child had asthma, she and the child made about fifteen minutes running almost every day in the morning, which greatly helped ease the child's symptom of asthma. And according to parents almost all children started learning math, English, and Chinese under the help of their parents at home. If I understand right, I believe these parents' definition of OST activities differs from the one offered by some North American organizations such as the version by Nevada Afterschool Network (NAN) in my literature review, in which activities parents provide are excluded.

Laura has enrolled her child in four programs. When I sought for reasons, she explained that she wanted "to expose children to as many activities as possible at young age, so when they grow up a bit, they will be able to tell what activities they especially favour and thus want to continue." Besides, she mentioned her preschool child has an elder sister who was playing piano really well. This somewhat served as a good motivation for her younger daughter to express her willingness to play piano too and she even wished to surpass her elder sister some day in the

future. But then Laura added, “I know playing musical instrument is the hardest. How long her interest can last? I cannot tell now.”

Wendong’s reason for enrolling his children into OST programs was “I do not want to see him stay at home alone. He can make some friends at least.” Wendong and Selina also explained the main reason for not sending their children to learn any musical instrument was because they themselves did not have this talent in music. Behind this explanation, I also noted down a story that happened between me and Wendong, hoping that it can provide some context. At my child’s first recital in a violin school, I invited Wendong and his child to come. Afterwards, his child was crying for a violin, and to comfort the child, Wendong later bought a cheap small size electronic piano for the child to play at home. When I asked him if he wanted to send the child to take music lessons, he could not decide. Wendong told me that in his university years he was very good at playing Chinese chess and drawing, but just that he himself had no talent in music. But inspite of that, he also mentioned to me that one of his friends had a daughter who started learning piano at the age of three. He expressed his admiration for the child and said, “she is this young, just a little child, like Jessie [his boy], but she is already able to play at a certain level.” Although Selina echoed the point that if parents were not gifted in music, the children might not have that gift either, which she used as a reason for not enrolling children in music lessons, meanwhile, she believed the choice of OST activities for children depended on the situation of individual families. She explained:

> It actually depends on the situations of individual families. I have two boys, so I tend to get them into sports activities. My primary focus is on their physical heath, because I believe only with good physical health, can they eat well and sleep well. And then they can study well. So in the first place, I want them to involve in sports activities… about art

> or other activities, we actually visit the library regularly every week, where they can have a variety of readings to choose from. I noticed they read all kinds of books, which I believe can benefit them in many ways… I never set restrictions to what kind of books they read. Back to the topic, sports activities are on the top of my list, I hope they have well-developed athletic ability and they can keep fit. (Selina)

Cathy, on the other hand, voiced her theory that to start learning musical instrument too early might have some side effects for children. She said,

> I heard people saying that it is not good for their body growth for too young children to learn musical instrument. Take violin for example, the neck and arm are usually made to be in an awkward position. Nobody can be used to it at the beginning, especially for young children. Children can easily feel tired. And if you force them to continue, this may damp their interest in the long run. (Cathy)

In a sense, Cathy was definitely right. But then why does playing musical instrument still appeal to other parents in this study? With this question in mind, I sailed further. Besides, around children's participation in programs, music lessons are usually much more expensive than other lessons. So I here reserve my assumption that parents' self-reported responses concerning whether or not to engage their children in music lessons might not completely reflect the true family situations due to the feeling of embarrassment or self-esteem.

Concerning participation in sports, parents generally agreed on the point that the kind of sports suitable for children should be age appropriate.

When I asked if some programs are more important than other programs, Eva was the one parent who has overtly confirmed this thought. Her reasons for giving preference to some programs over others included whether the programs could offer chances for children to explore

the fun themselves, whether the program was affordable as well as reasons related to her own childhood dream. She has raised a principle of choosing programs—a sport program, a musical instrument plus Chinese learning. She said,

> That's for sure. At present, I will watch for their personal interests. When the child is about seven or eight years old, you can almost figure out about their personal interests. But my consideration in choosing a program initially is based on this principle: first, I must choose a sport program. About sport program, I talked to a friend the other day… Children can take some initiatives in some sports, but on the other hand, for sports like skating, they may be passive at first due to unfamiliarity with the sports. If you do not bother to introduce it into their lives, and take them to skate, they will never learn how fun skating can be. So this is a process that they move from being passive to being active. It depends on how parents guide them. But those costly ones, like skiing, we will not bother to think about it at present, for we cannot afford it. The second thing is about leaning a musical instrument. If, for example, learning piano, I have to see if they have that interest. If they have no interest at all, I will not force them to do it. No matter how much benefit kids can get from learning, if they have no interest, that will become something of little value or interest (Here she used a Chinese term *ji lei*, which literally means chicken rib. The term was derived from a story in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* describing someone or something that appears to be very smart or very valuable, but in fact of little use in practical reality). Although playing piano is not a must, because they can change to singing or any other musical instrument in the future. But music itself, I think is important for them. Music can foster good dispositions and perseverance, can work on intelligence, can keep children away from rudeness, and there are many other

> good things about music. So music is the second thing I will definitely consider. And last, I feel learning Chinese is also a must. After all, there are lots of good things in Chinese culture. Only through learning the language, they can knock open the door to the deep and profound culture… these three things… they bring help to kids from different angles. I have these thoughts, probably also because I myself once wanted to do but was not offered the chances to do… Now we are creating chances for them, although we are not that rich. At least they have opportunities, and they have the choice to do or not to do. So my responsibility is to provide opportunities. And it is their business if they like it or not. (Eva)

As I noted, Eva was the only one parent who overtly expressed her preference of some programs over other programs. Besides, in an earlier comment, Selina mentioned she considered sports very important for her boys. Other than that, other parents did not seem to give clear preference to some programs over others. Meanwhile, I have also noticed that none of the parents ever distinguish "structured activities" with "non-structured activities" or "supervised activities" with "non-supervised activities." Also, these parents did not seem to bother with who should be the "legitimate provider" for OST activities. This somewhat was in line with what I have reviewed about "*ke wai huo dong*" in China – a Chinese form of OST activities, which seems to have a broader inclusion of types of activities and more flexibility in the location or time for activities.

Out-of-school (OST) activity arrangement for children two years later

Table 11 shows children's participation in OST activities or programs two years after my first interview.

Table 11 OST Activity arrangement for children

Children	***Participation in activities provided by outside resources***
Wendong's son	Swimming; drama (one year); learning piano; skating; learning Chinese
Yulian's son	Skating; swimming; learning piano; learning Chinese
Rantel's son	Drawing; skating; learning piano; learning Chinese
Yona's son	Learning violin; skating; swimming; learning Chinese
Selina 's son	Drawing; skating; swimming; learning Chinese
Eva's son	Learning piano; swimming; skiing; skating; learning Chinese
Rachael's daughter	Learning piano; drawing; dancing; skiing; skating; vocal lessons; learning Chinese
Yani's daughter	Learning violin; Dancing; learning Chinese
Laura's daughter	Learning piano; dancing; drawing; swimming; skating; learning Chinese (one year)
Tina's daughter	Learning zither; Dancing; swimming; playing soccer; learning Chinese
Ying's daughter	Learning piano; dancing; swimming; skating; learning Chinese
Cathy's daughter	Drawing; dancing; swimming; skating; learning Chinese; street Smart program

Source: Data gained from follow-up conversations

Table 11 shows that all but one family (Selina) in the study eventually enrolled their children in music lessons. This change may be in part due to the change in families' socioeconomic status and also due to the comparison with others as reported by some parents in the study (e.g., Ying). Ying had her daughter started piano lessons sometime after all her friends'

children take some kind of music lessons. And she was just "to follow suit." Yulian's reason for enrolling her child in piano program was interesting. She said,

> You will not believe that our initial motive to have our son to play piano was to help him practice coordination of his hands and feet. Until he was six years old, he still could not tie his shoes well. So I and my family discussed and reached the agreement that playing piano might be helpful. We wanted to see if that could help. Plus my son also agreed to try. So that was how he started learning piano and since then he has been playing piano up to now. Unfortunately, he doesn't make too much progress in tying his shoes. (Yulian)

Wendong's child has taken drama lessons for a year but stopped due to the difficulty of transportation because the mother and the child had to travel pretty far by taking transit to the lessons and that made both the mother and the child very tired. Since in the previous interview Wendong talked about the possibility of children's lack of talent in music due to the parents' gene defect, out of curiosity I raised this question again. Wendong explained the family actually went to several children's recital and other events like concert and graduation ceremony. Probably due to admiration for the other children's achievement plus a bit of envy as well as a bit of curiosity, the child himself strongly expressed the desire to learn piano. And by now Wendong was actually quite satisfied with the child's progress and found that the child has developed quite some interest in music after taking piano lessons.

Following the question about the choice of programs, often I would also prompt the question "why did you want him or her to learn music?" Most parents who *de facto* enrolled their children in lessons playing musical instruments agreed that the primary reason for taking music lessons was not based on children's talent. Instead, they believed children did not have to be a musical genius to learn to play a musical instrument. In consensus, they believed playing music

could benefit children in many ways. For example, Laura explained, “music can enrich children’s lives in such a way that when they grow up and have emotional difficulty, playing a piece of music probably can serve to heal their sorrow well. That is a good outlet for letting out stressed feelings.” To support her statement, she mentioned famous people like Einstein (a great scientist), Pushkin (a Russian poet) and some other big names, whose career could be in fields other than music but who used music as a spiritual harbor for their feelings. Other reasons given by parents in children’s learning music also included: to help children to become self-disciplined and morally constrained, to train them to be patient with delayed award (e.g., mastery in music and delight brought to them and others), and to keep them away from rudeness and vulgar behavior or people through developing a self-consciousness.

While children’s participation in sports, particularly outdoor sports, were influenced by the seasons, every child has taken or was taking some kind of sports activities when programs were available. Children were reported to go to clubs or summer camps for soccer, swimming, skating or skiing lessons. It should be noted here that only two children took skiing lessons. In an earlier comment, Eva mentioned they could not afford it. Economic well-being thus appears to be a limited factor to children’s participation in certain OST activities. Other than that some parents constantly mentioned, “if children do not learn things like snowboarding, skating or hockey, what else can you let them do for this long winter?” They stressed the word “long,” I guess the winter is really too long for them because they never experienced such tough winter in their whole life before immigration. As a matter of fact, the participation in sports such as soccer, skating and skiing is actually not very popular in China. Participation in these winter sports therefore to great extent can reflect parents and children’s effort in integrating into the mainstream culture. And this finding somehow provides a counter view to Raleigh’s (2008)

hypothesis that immigrant parents of Asian children may lean more towards enrolling their children in music lessons over organized athletics. This disagreement may be due to time and contextual change, or differences in parents' socioeconomic background of samplings, or regional differences, or other reasons.

Concerning choice of OST programs for children, Laura's talk also drew my attention. She said she had wanted her child to go to a Drama camp, but after talking with the child she changed her mind. She said,

> You know, to learn drama, you learn to talk in front of people, and you need to perform on the stage. But I talked this to Kelley, and she said, "I do not want to talk in front of so many people." If that's the case, I feel I should not push her too much, because I know she is an exceptionally shy kid. It takes time for her to build up this open attitude and daringness. So I decide not to register her in the program. I do not want her to feel embarrassed. (Laura)

Laura's democratic and patient attitude somewhat departs from that of traditional Chinese parenting which is usually characterized with strictness and control in prior studies (e.g., Chao, 1994; Ho, 1986; Kelley & Tsang, 1992; Lin & Fu, 1990). In contrast, Yona's attitude was, "now I feel, as long as you put them in the program (Her child was learning violin), sooner or later they will be able to play."

Interestingly, none of the children ever take any tutoring programs except for only Laura mentioned she had a plan to do that later. This may be explained by these parents' highly educated background and Chinese tradition that Chinese parents usually provide academic support to children at home. Yet, more than half of the parents reported that they began to worry

bit about their children's English reading and writing. Yani who did not seem to worry too much expressed her understanding of the process of developing bi-lingual capability. She said,

> What we can do to help is encouraging them to read more, to practice speaking more and to write more… about this, I ask my kid to write down five good English sentences he can get from any sources, books, people or whatever. And sometimes I encourage him to read aloud, just as what we did when we were in school. As long as they keep doing their study job well, I do not see the reason they should fail in their English. After all, bilingual capability takes time. (Yani)

Laura has mentioned she might send her child to Kuman (a popular supplementary tutoring service) for math training, but then she added,

> I have not made up my mind yet. I have a concern in my mind. If kids learn too advanced, they will feel bored and will be easily distracted in the classroom, because the teachers' teaching may be already known to them. Besides, the way they help kids is mostly giving them lots of exercises to do, which is similar to what we do in China. And I feel kids need to digest the new knowledge by listening to the teachers' illustration and demonstration. I do not want to see them just be buried in the homework all the time. Kids need play time… they maybe have some strength in math training…On the other hand, do not take it that I will allow my kids to idle their time away by just playing, especially in summer. As a matter of fact, I have bought the curriculum, a very thick book, good for them to work on for a whole year. English, math, and science, all the subjects are included in the curriculum book. (Laura)

Cathy was the only one who ever involved her child in programs that aim to build up children's safety awareness. She said,

> I saw this flyer in the school office the other day, with lots of programs listed. I noticed this program called *Street Smart*, which aims to teach kids what to do if strangers come up to them. I believe such kind of knowledge is very useful. So I registered for her. (Cathy)

Learning Chinese

All parents have come to realize the fact that learning Chinese is no less important than learning English nowadays, due to the booming economy in China. My respondents, like other immigrant Chinese parents also think far for their children. So, not surprisingly, all children started to take Chinese lessons when they reached 6 years old. And "learning Chinese is very important," was reported by all parents interviewed. These parents believed, as a language, that Chinese can carry over the Chinese cultural heritage and bridge the world and China, and as a symbol, it gives Chinese their ethnic identity, a sense of belonging.

Yet my data results show that most of the parents expressed that they did not expect their children to have a mastery of Chinese language as children do in China. To learn Chinese and know how to use them in daily life were the main purposes of parents sending their children to weekend Chinese schools. And they also showed their understanding that English represents the mainstream in the language context they are now living in. But other than that, some parents also raised concerns. Yulian, Richael, Yona and Tina all mentioned that they have tried to train their children to speak Chinese at home. But what made them feel helpless and resigned was that when they talked to their children in Chinese, the responses they usually got from their children were in English. And parents could see children had no genuine interest or motivation in learning Chinese. Yona even lost her temper sometimes because her son could not make sentences by using simple Chinese words. Yulian held the belief that "parents have to push children if you

really want them to learn Chinese, because laziness is their nature." Interestingly, Tina did just the opposite and she said, "I do not push at all nowadays. I used to push a lot when my son was very little, but only ended up both of us in bad mood."

Cathy has had her daughter returning China for the summer last year and she noticed the child has made rapid progress in her Chinese. And so she suggested,

> Learning Chinese in a country other than China is like putting children in a vacuum environment. Children have no background knowledge about Chinese culture. Historically, many Chinese idioms have a story behind them. I once tried to explain some of the Chinese poems to my child and found it very difficult, not to mention let children understand all that. So my suggestion is that to raise their interest in learning Chinese, we can give them some things to do that may interest them. For example, I once sent my child back to China for a camp in the summer. They visited several main cities in China. And they cooperated with Chinese students on some of the projects. She even made some Chinese friends. Because her Chinese friends gave her a taste of Chinese pop culture, in order to have something to chat with her Chinese friends, she began to take initiatives in watching news about China. (Cathy)

Wendong's view, however, from another perspective, provided some insights into this issue. He said,

> I think the reason may be also on Chinese parents. They always feel, because they are Chinese, I mean they identify themselves as Chinese, they think their children without choice should be good at Chinese too. But the truth is: Chinese is a foreign language for these children. It's understandable that most of the children do not want to

> go to Chinese school on weekend, because in their mind that day should be their play day. (Wendong)

In addition, Wendong continued to suggest,

> Chinese schools can also do things to make Chinese learning a fun experience for children. I say so because Chinese schools mostly are using the books they imported from China. Those books have little to do with what children are experiencing in their school and in their lives here. (Wendong)

Laura was the only parent whose child stopped learning Chinese after a year. She explained, "the Chinese school teachers examine the kids almost every week. This made my child not wanting to go there. And if she emotionally resist going, I do not want to push her." Although Laura stopped sending her child to Chinese language school after one year, she herself continued to teach the child Chinese. When Laura's parents came to live with them in Canada, Chinese teaching at home became even easier. And besides, her parents currently lived with them, which helped create a Chinese language environment for children.

This is maybe also true with some other families (e.g., the family of Rachael, Yani, Selina, Wendong, Tina, Eva, Cathy, Yulian and Yona). With grandparents present at home, lots of communications have to be carried out in Chinese. Parents and grandparents therefore consciously and unconsciously provide a chance for children to be immersed in the Chinese language environment in their daily life.

Perceptions of OST participation and concerns

Parents' perceptions of OST participation revealed that on the one hand they recognized the benefit of OST participation on children, and on the other hand, they also had pragmatic concerns.

Perceived benefits of OST participation

Although in many other places, when answering some of my other questions, parents have already directly or indirectly touched upon this topic, I again raised it in the hope that parents could elicit more thoughts. Previously, Eva has mentioned that music in general can foster good dispositions, can work on intelligence, and can keep children away from rudeness. Selina mentioned learning Chinese allow children the opportunity to "knock open the door to the deep and profound culture." Rachael mentioned learning art (e.g., dancing; playing a musical instrument such as violin or piano) can foster elegant and decent dispositions in children. Besides, all parents agreed that sports can build up the body's strength and balance. According to parents, children love sports and this makes it easy to involve children in sports activities. In the following I noted down more of parents' thoughts relevant to the topic.

Laura echoed with Eva's point about benefit of engaging in music learning. In addition, she tried to give scientific support.

> Isn't that true that science has proved that playing musical instrument can exercise the brain, the coordination of hands and more importantly playing musical instrument can foster strong psychological state? I mean, you have to memorize lots of notes, and that is a good practice for your brain. Besides, in an article I once read, scientists say fingers have memory too and with practice your fingers will be very dexterous and can move quickly. The task is indeed a very complicated coordination between many muscles… Aside from that, since practice happens every day, this gradually adds up to a process, in which, personality will be forged, such as perseverance. If you can sail through this process, you will be able to stand other kind of hard work in this world. This process will be helpful in building up a good habit. Good habit needs to be trained over time. Playing

> musical instruments is the hardest task. I doubt if any kids will say they love it, even they have played for several years. To be frank, I myself sometimes even feel painful because I have to stick to the job before they want to give up. That was really tiring. But I believe if this has become a habit, that means, if they do not do it, they will feel their day is incomplete… I heard lots of parents say their grown-up kids complained to them why they (the parents) did not push them harder when they were young, because they think it is unreasonable for parents not to push since they, both kids and parents, have already invested in some much time and energy. (Laura)

While Laura has reinforced the benefits of children playing musical instruments, she also suggested this was a difficult job for both children and parents. Other important views also include: participation in programs can help children learn important life values and philosophy such as practice makes perfect as well as no pains, no gains. Rantel echoed the point of view by saying,

> I told my child, anything, if you want to learn and learn well, you have to practice. Take using chopsticks for example. When I was only three or four years old, my parents trained me to use chopsticks. My father sometimes even knocked my hand if I did not hold chopsticks right. You can see even such a small thing may not be easy at the beginning. Playing piano is a thousand times more difficult. But it works well in fostering the good personality traits, through accumulation of small steps. After all, Rome was not built in one day (Here she quoted from the Chinese poem that *bing dong san chi fei yi ri zhi han*, which literally means the three-foot-thick ice was not formed overnight). (Rantel)

In addition, parents also mentioned the participation in programs can help cultivate certain positive traits in children, such as confidence, perseverance, openness or daringness, and diligence. Yulian recalled how her child's experience with recitals helped him build up confidence over time.

> He almost trembled when it was his turn to do the violin. He first hid behind the chair. My husband, I guess he felt losing face, anyway, he asked my son to stand up, in a rather harsh attitude. It almost sounded quite painful for my son to do that recital. And before and after the recital, he said, 'I hate it, I hate it.' The second time, he was still nervous, but not as difficult as the first time for us to get him out to perform in front of all of parents and kids. (Yulian)

This has given a vivid picture of how the child gradually overcame his timidity and built up confidence in high-pressure situations such as recitals or competitions. Laura happened to mention this as well. She said, "because you need to perform in front of many families at the recital, you have to be strong. This is especially a good way to build confidence in those shy kids." Yani mentioned that her daughter has played violin in some school events and that made the little girl very proud of herself.

A good lesson I learned from these parents is that participation in OST activities not only help children develop certain skills, more importantly, it reflects the parents' intention to strategically foster in children a sense of self-cultivation of proper conduct as human beings. Yet, of course, the behavior of trying new things or taking risks incurs cost. About this, I overheard many stories about parents making considerable effort to involve their children in various programs or activities, which impacted the whole family in terms of time scheduling,

transportation arrangement, energy attrition, housework struggle, relationship conflicts and most understandably, money cost.

Teachers

Although the topic about teachers was not included in my questions, I learned from parents' talk that they have given due attention to choosing the right teachers for their children and their motivations in choosing teachers do not seem to be in line with traditional Chinese thinking. Lessons in music, dance, singing, and drawing are usually provided by private teachers. As one of the mothers who send their children for music lessons, I think the pleasant interaction between the good teachers and the children should also count as one important benefit for children. Laura and Ying confirmed my thought. They happened to have chosen the same piano teacher for children. They mentioned the teacher was "so nice, so patient, that sometimes she just let kids play on the piano as long as they want. She never charged us extra money. Kids listen to her and they practice for her." Their theory about children practicing for their beloved teacher was interesting and commonly accepted among other parents.

From another perspective, Rachael and Eva mentioned that they went to Western teachers instead of Chinese teachers, because "Chinese teachers are too strict. Most of them have received education in academism. Their teaching is not as creative and relaxed as Western teachers." Besides, "I remember a parent told me that her daughter was learning drawing from a Chinese teacher. From the right beginning, the teacher made her do sketches. That scared the little girl and her mother away," recalled Eva. That aside, Eva at an earlier time mentioned about "I overheard some parents saying that you do not have to be very selective with the first teacher. But when kids are up to certain level, the second teacher has to be pretty knowledgeable in his specialized field."

Persistency and continuity

Persistency and continuity in taking lessons was observed with every family, regardless of participation in art lessons (including playing music instruments, dancing, drawing and vocal lessons) or sports programs. Although parents might not know too much about theories related to positive youth development, intuitively, their practices fit the major research finding that persistent participation in extracurricular activities is more beneficial than periodic involvement—since increased mastery of skills gained from ongoing practice or fostering relationships with adult role models—occur over time. They require time and practice in order to improve.

Other concerns

Parents' perceived benefits of OST participation are consonant with the findings in prior studies. In addition, my data revealed some of these immigrant parents' pragmatic concerns and purposes of engaging children in OST activities. For example, some parents expressed their worries about the negative influences from the media and society. Tina considered OST activities a way to prevent children from being negatively affected by the outside world. She mentioned,

> You have to fill in their time with various activities, because in that case, they can avoid influences from bad kids. Or you have to shut them in the house. But that is not working well… I have heard about several cases of gang shooting in this city. If your kids get involved in those things, their future will be ruined. (Tina)

Other pragmatic concerns include whether children can establish healthy friendship, whether the programs are convenient and affordable, and whether the programs also consider parents' needs. In Yulian's case, earlier in the chapter, I have mentioned Yulian felt worried because of her son's making friends with a child given special treatment in the classroom. She

suggested why she wanted her child to go to good OST programs. She said, “I want him to make friends with kids who are healthy and positive and with the same interest.” Some other parents expressed their choice of OST programs out of the consideration of convenience. Yona and Cathy said because they happened to hear from other parents that university has organized some good programs for kids. Since they lived near university, they were happy the programs were very convenient and saved them time and energy. On the other side, Ying mentioned her concern about the cost, “those out-of-school activities, cost quite a bit. You need to invest quite some money. My primary concern is if they are good for learning.” Besides, Wendong also mentioned that the weekend Chinese school was providing all kinds of enrichment programs for children and parents in the same school building such as *wei qi*, badminton, martial arts as well as some supplementary lessons in English reading. “That was a good arrangement for both children and parents,” he said.

Besides, Selina mentioned her practical purposes of engaging her son in Chinese learning. She said,

> I want him to have a good command of Chinese, so in the future, he can have more choices and he will not be failed just because of his language limitation. In addition, I told him, “You have to learn Chinese. Because when I am getting older and older, I may choose to return China for my last remaining years. If you do not learn Chinese, you will not be able to understand Chinese people.” And besides, I have two nephews. The elder brother is 17 years old. He is a very filial son. He is especially good to his grandparents. The first time he earned eight hundred Chinese dollars, he gave all the money to his grandparents. That really impressed me. I believe only traditional Chinese culture can foster such virtue in young people. I have planned to bring my son with me to visit China

> more often so he can spend some time with my nephews. We actually talked through network phone many times already, and my son likes my nephews. That even gives him motivation to learn Chinese. Although he is still feeling difficulty in speaking and writing Chinese, he is making progress through talking to our relatives using the network phone. (Selina)

A point raised by Wendong especially drew my attention. He mentioned about an enrolment policy in some Ivy League universities in America.

> The reality makes it hard for Asian kids in recent years. In the future, it can be harder for our kids. I heard, in quite some Ivy League universities, they use race as a main factor in their admission policy. It is said Asian American kids have to be 140 points better than White applicants in their SAT, 280 points better than Hispanic applicants and 450 points better than Black applicants. This is obviously unfair. Just because they think Asian kids without doubt should be better. There are even extreme cases that even Asian kids receive great marks, they may still be refused, because universities also set up many other criteria that block them from entering the universities… the criteria, very subjective ones, such as your contributions to the community, your leadership skills or your OST participation. What can you do but taking all these pressures and pushing kids to study even harder? Universities expect more from kids of Asian descendent and make it harder for them compared to other ethnic groups… that is due to the stereotype of Asian people or maybe they just want to find a good excuse to refuse you. . . . In a sense, I sometimes even feel Chinese college entrance exam is more fair than the admission policy in America. The college entrance exam in America is comparatively too easy. But then they can manipulate other subjective criteria to control the admission of intellectually

> excellent Asian students. They said they want diversity on the campus. But they gave priorities to kids of powerful and rich families. Besides, I heard about cases of some students cheating in their out of school community volunteer experiences. (Wendong)

Wendong's comment confirmed the prior theory that the model minority stereotype gives tough times for Asian or Chinese parents. Discrimination or deficiency in educational systems, the macro social issues are there to require our reflection and constructive action.

Besides, parents also shared with me some of the information they learned about current situations in China. Tina said,

> I actually never intentionally talk to them about topics on childrearing. Just because many of them are about my age, so they have kids just about the same age as my kids. It seems quite natural that each time our talk will eventually lead to how to raise kids and stuff like that. From their talk, I have this impression that children back in China are just too busy, busy with school and busy with all kinds of OST activities. But all what they are doing or what their parents want them to do is for the purpose of moving up to good schools…because schools will consider everything when they make decisions about which kids to pick. This include physical exercises (PE), academic marks, and what activities children do in their out of school time. I heard about a very sad story. One of my friends has a daughter who is going to move on to junior high school. The day for PE exam happened to coincide with the little girls' menstrual period. But in order to get a good mark in PE, the little girl has to take medication to stop the period. You have no choice… otherwise you are going to miss the chance. (Tina)

Tina's words vividly brought forward a picture as to how intense the school competition can be in China. In fact, the intensity of schooling for Chinese children is just the tip of the iceberg. As Rantel also mentioned,

> Why people in China think education is so important? High school students have very little chance to get a job; they have to move on to high school, good high school, because regular high school cannot guarantee them to pass the college entrance examination. And you have to go to a best university, because even you graduate from university, you have to compete with tens of thousands of other university graduates for a job. Nowadays, those employers, they play cards in a way that ordinary people do not understand. Just for a basic level administrator's position, they ask for master degree or even doctoral degree. I think this is because in China there are too many graduates these years. (Rantel)

Selina also commented,

> I heard many Chinese parents are exhausting themselves taking kids to all kinds of supplementary learning programs, like English, math, Chinese, science. They register kids in many after school lessons. And kids, based on my observation, some of them can carry out what parents expect them to do. And they are doing very good jobs. But many other kids, they are tired of such busy arrangement, they feel upset. But they dare not to do or say anything to upset their parents. I feel this is suppressing kids' nature. (Selina)

What was worse, Wendong talked about what he read on the Internet, a news that really upset many Chinese parents. He mentioned that nowadays, because playing piano or violin is quite popular among Chinese children, some schools back in China have thus come up with this bitterest demand in their admission policy that students need to be able to play some very unpopular musical instruments, such as harp or saxophone. And about sports, again, children

who play equestrian (rodeo riding), fencing or golf have greater chances to be admitted into best universities in America.

The above observations made by my respondents are profound. Obviously, the functions and connotations of OST activities have become much more sophisticated than we think. It again reflects the kind of institutional obstacles that can bring confusion to parents and result in feelings of helplessness.

Other sources of influence on parents

Although I already had some ideas about where the influences were coming from (e.g., life experiences, work experiences, people interactions, media, etc.), to learn more about influences on parents, I asked the question "are there any factors or people that can influence your decisions?" Besides immediate influences from socioeconomic changes in life, family, and people living around them, parents have also recognized other sources of influences, such as relatives and friends in China and all kinds of media. A few parents reported they were maintaining connections with relatives and friends in China. From time to time, they exchange information on many things regularly, including children's school experience and OST programs. It is noteworthy that although parents mentioned they were influenced by this or that factor, these parents appeared not to be passively accepting the influences on them, instead, they made their own reflections.

Besides, many respondents also in many places mentioned their spouses' response to their arrangement for children and to the participation in OST programs, although I did not specifically ask questions in this respect. Wendong attributed his child's accomplishment to his wife. He said, "my wife has given too much of herself into taking care of kids. She is warm and caring, yet she is also very strict with kids… I call her 'tiger mom.'" Ann, the wife, used to be a

medical doctor in China. But she did not practice her profession as a medical doctor in Canada due to pressure of life, family needs, the language barrier and a lack of Canadian education or experience. But then she could devote much more time to be with kids than before.

There also appeared that some of the spouses were not as supportive. In Yani's case, her husband actually did not think playing a musical instrument would help much in a child's future career or life. Yani recalled, "he said: 'Playing violin? They can hardly find a job in the future if they are not the best.'" And besides, the family had to spare much money for this "luxury." Although eventually Yani insisted that her daughter learn violin, she admitted that she struggled, with her husband and with herself.

Also, children seemed to influence parents' decision too. From what Laura has told me about the reaction of her second child, I can see the sibling can also serve as a role model. In fact, the older sibling is instrumental in this process of parents making OST decisions for children. Besides, I still remember how Wendong changed his mind and enrolled the child in the piano lessons, because the child insisted.

Summer activity arrangement

Summer activities arrangement for children was considered quite a difficult task for most of the parents in the study. Several parents complained the summer break was too long for school children in Canada and caused disturbance in many family arrangement since schools close, teachers take vacation and mostly, parents have to put work aside and stay with children. Meanwhile, most of the parents also stated that they believed the summer time was a necessary break and children could make use of this time to review their learning and can learn new things as well. In Wendong, Yulian, Tina, Cathy, and Laura's case, they made children do extra learning in math, English reading, and Chinese. In almost all the families, grandparents greatly

helped in monitoring children to get their work done every day. Arrangement such as field trip to national parks and camping and travelling were also found with all families.

Quite a few parents reported their children's music lessons stopped for the summer because teachers also wanted to take a break. And several parents also registered their children in some of the OST programs, such as soccer camp, science camp and other camps sponsored by the university as well as other private organizations. Yulian registered her child in a soccer camp for one month. She said,

> He loved it. This was the first time he went to such a camp. He was excited. Look at his skin, becoming so dark now. He even said he would love to go to the camp for another month. But I have to consider my budget. Besides, he needs to do some work at home and prepare for the school. I want him to try something else next year. (Yulian)

Cathy and Yulian also mentioned about a free "Drop and Play" program sponsored by the City of Calgary. They felt very pleased because the program was free and safe, and because children had a chance to get to know new communities around the city. "I myself never visited some of the communities before," reported Yulian.

Rantel and her child returned China for two months. During the time in China, she sent her son to a Chinese school where they held a class for math learning. She said,

> You know the kids in grade three in China, their math is at a much advanced level compared with that of school in Canada. My son got 30 percent in the first test after he was joining a group of grade three kids there. But he was confident and he said, do not worry mom, I will catch up. And out of my expectation he really made it and got 100 percent in the last test before we came back. (Rantel)

What's more, after coming back to Canada, the child pulled off the first place in math exam in the provincial test in his Canadian school. Rantel was very proud and she attributed her son' accomplishment to the inquisitive teaching method used by the math teacher in her son's school.

Random talks

When she talked about how she managed to provide her children chances to be involved in various activities, Selina made a comparison with the older generation of immigrants. I feel her comment was insightful and useful for my analysis. She said,

> If we think about the historical context, we can see that the older generation Chinese immigrants, they themselves have not received good education, and meanwhile they were busy with supporting their families. So their kids, they went to school during the day and came back at night. They played by themselves, without parents supervision. They did not have chances to go to extracurricular activities. Their parents did not have resources to support their extracurricular activities nor did they have energy to manage that. (Selina)

So far I have faithfully documented the insightful thoughts produced by my respondents and grouped them under the proper topics to the best of my knowledge. In the next chapter, I will present themes extracted from these thoughts and summarize my conclusions and discussion.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to look into the perceptive and experiential worlds of immigrant parents in order to understand their decisions in relation to arrangement for children's out-of-school time (OST) activities. Guided by an ecological framework, I have had a chance to go through the shifts and changes in these immigrants' lives due to immigration to Canada along with other influences together with them. By listening to these immigrant Chinese parents, a picture gradually emerged from their stories and descriptions. This picture is not static. Instead, it records an ongoing journey of ups and downs, bumps and bruises, as well as reflections and determinations. It brings forward a profound interpretation of how all kinds of influences coming from various ecological systems interplayed in the transition and transformation of ideas and how such a trend has been permeating into the domain of childrearing. To a great extent, it also mirrors the considerable effort these parents exerted to create an enjoyable, fulfilling and normal life for their children, which is essentially an important part of their settlement and adaptation task.

In many ways, the immigrant parents in this study differ from the older generation of immigrant parents, or from the non-immigrant Chinese parents back in China, or from the Western Canadian parents, or from their children—the next generation as well. They also differ from other parents' groups coming from diverse backgrounds. They even differ among themselves in a number of ways. But meanwhile this group of immigrant Chinese parents bear some of the similar marks, such as that they are well educated and thoughtful; they have rich pre- and post-immigration life experiences; they are active in adapting to their new lives in Canada– the characteristics that make their experiences to be especially worthy of paying attention to,

especially when first generation immigrant parents have become an important part of the context when assessing the achievement of the second and third generation of immigrants (Feliciano, 2006).

Conclusions

Along with my learning and understanding, several major findings weigh out. They are: 1) multiple stages toward movement or change and, 2) OST activities arrangement: understanding, multiple functions, the pattern, and premises and conditions. In the following, I will provide further explanations for each of my findings.

Multiple stages toward movement or change

In consonance with what prior studies (e.g., Chao, 1996; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Li, 2001; Lin & Fu, 1990) have revealed, this study has also detected shifts and changes in parental childrearing beliefs due to immigration along with other influences. However, as Ying-yi Hong and her colleagues (Hong, Morris, C. Y. Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000) pointed out the past models (e.g., Berry, 1988; Birman, 1996; Phinney, 1996) on assimilation largely focus on the outcome of acculturation more than on the process, which implicitly acknowledged the current sociological thought that assimilation is not a single event, but a process. Based on my data, I also noticed this gap stretching between parents' beliefs and practices originated from their homeland culture and their current stage of understanding and learning after years of living in the host culture. Further, I agree that this process or this gap cannot be filled just by scoring individuals "on the extent to which they have absorbed the new culture or retained the original one" (Hong et al., 2000, p. 718).

As I have found out, to arrive at the current stage of childrearing beliefs and practices, the Chinese immigrant parents in this study without exception actually have gone through a complex

process of multiple stages. As a matter of fact, there are also researchers who have attained to this process. For example, it is often mentioned in the literature that negotiation of contradictions, ambiguities and multiple subjectivities can occur in the acculturation process (see Lim & Wieling, 2004). However, in my opinion, such a description of this process is rather general in describing what my respondents have gone through. Through analyzing my respondents' stories and descriptions, I came up with the point that in this process, several stages toward movement or change in beliefs and practices might have been involved. As I name it, these stages include *confusion and uncertainty, comparison, evaluation, clarification, reflection, selection, and movement*. These stages, as demonstrated by my respondents, are not clear-cut. Rather, they represent a continuous or embedded or interfaced process. Depending on their personal experiences with the two cultures as well as their individual personalities, some respondents might have gone through every stage in the process while others might not. Besides, some stages might be visited and revisited out of necessity in the lives of some immigrant Chinese parents in the study. As well, depending on individual parent, these stages can come in different order and not necessarily occur in a linear style. The depth into each stage and the pace can vary as well. It is also possible there are times that some stages can work separately or they can work in different combinations.

Before I proceed to explain these stages based on my data, I want to make a note that, to value the authenticity, I will use respondents' self-reported experiences to support my explanation of the stages in the process.

Confusion and uncertainty

It is natural and understandable that confusion and uncertainty often accompany the period of transition. Just as what Sharlin and Moin (2001) suggested in their study of new immigrants'

perception of family life in origin and host culture, “immigration is a phenomenon which requires adaptation to a new, culturally unfamiliar environment that generates a high level of uncertainty” (p. 405). This uncertainty could result from unfamiliarity with the typical norms and patterns in the host culture, which can play a significantly important role in carrying out effective daily communication and affecting the ability to understand and explain the behaviour of others. In other literature (e.g., Lim & Wieling, 2004), it has been also revealed the ambiguity and uncertainties are common characteristics of *mentality of borderland*. According to Falicov (1995), borderland living is fraught with contradictions and ambiguities. Questions such as “what is mainstream?” and “where is mainstream?” can arise right after immigrants coming to the new country and continue into every aspects of their actual living. Such experiences of confusion and uncertainty are exemplified in the following examples.

- In the study, respondents’ experiences constantly demonstrated their learning that immigration can pose a lot of questions without definite answers. Some parents, for example, Yulian and Eva have brought up the challenge of life ambiguities experienced in the everyday realities of these immigrants by saying, “indeed, in the process of immigration and adjustment, parents have to make a long list of choices… But there have been a while that I began to doubt about myself. That was definitely the influence of immigration” (Yulian), and “now I am living in Canada, I cannot boast to say that I know about this country, after all, about many things, I am still an outsider… I feel it is hard to use just a word ‘like’ to describe my mixed feelings toward life in Canada. Until now, I sometimes feel not so sure if immigration is the right decision. At least, I was not one hundred percent sure” (Eva).

- A language barrier, whether with regard to English language skills or communication skills, has proved likely to create confusion in immigrants in this study. For example, Ying has insofar explained her confusion, “my language barrier, such as my English comprehension, sometimes my kid used a word that might not sound right to us based on our knowledge about English, but maybe she has used it in the proper situations… but I blame her, because I don’t understand the use of the word… because she always brings back information which can be embedded in the English context, that you don’t understand, that is actually about culture. You don’t know. How can you understand? So this is the situation that you cannot help much. I might have upset her” (Ying).
- When Wendong reflected on how model minority stereotype can give tough times for Asian or Chinese parents and the inappropriateness of some Ivy League universities in America who use subjective criteria in their enrolment policies, he disclosed a feeling of confusion and uncertainty fomented by institutional obstacles as well as organizational obstacles. He lamented, “what can you do but taking all these pressures and pushing kids to study even harder? Universities expect more from kids of Asian descendent and make it harder for them compared to other ethnic groups?” The implied questions, as I understand, direct to the real mission of OST activities, e.g., *which comes first, the needs of children and families or the need to help brighten up children’s school applications?*
- Unfamiliarity with school policies, a lack of understanding as well as a lack of effective communication between school and home can also be among reasons that have caused confusion in parents. For one example, Yulian expressed her confusion when she noted a child received special treatment—sitting separately from other children in the classroom, and when she could not solicit a round explanation from schools. She said, “but they did

not tell me what kind of special needs are, because that kid looks physically healthy… How can I stop worrying?" (Yulian). For another example, the immigrant Chinese parents in this study from time to time raised quite divergent and sometimes even opposite opinions about certain aspects of school practice in Canadian schools, e.g., whether moral education is effective in Canadian schools.

- To some extent, parents' choice of OST activities for their children also exemplified their confusion and uncertainty, which might have been caused by a lack of knowledge about common practices among local or Caucasian Canadians and unawareness of important outside OST resources. For one example, some of my respondents cling to what they know about the popular practice among Chinese parents with regard to OST activities (e.g., learning a musical instrument; dancing; drawing) or what they have learned from other parents, Chinese or not. For another example, some of my respondents' choices of OST activities does not seem to be completely in congruence with their understanding of competencies or what they wish to nurture in their children (e.g., none of the choices is directly aiming at cultivating competence of problem solving or self-reliant life skills).

In the above, I have made an attempt to exemplify how confusions and uncertainties confound these immigrant Chinese parents' effort in their adaptation process including their attempt to bring children's lives on track. On the one hand, these confusions and uncertainties are common and thus taken as part of the normal life. On the other hand, these confusions and uncertainties produce impetus for these Chinese immigrant parents to move further in order to reach a clear state of mind. The following stages make the bridge.

Comparison

Life before immigration and life after immigration set a vast backdrop for everyday cross-cultural comparison. According to some scholars (e.g., Kruglanski & Mayseless, 1990; Suls & Miller, 1977), on the level of everyday consciousness, new immigrants are constantly performing "cross-cultural comparative studies," the results of which can significantly impact on their adjustment to the host culture and on their attitudes toward the new environment (Sharlin & Moin, 2001, p. 405). In this study, I am quite certain that my respondents have been constantly doing comparative studies in their lives. Through comparisons, my respondents like other immigrants are learning the similarities and differences in all aspects of life and are accumulating evidence for evaluation and judgement. Here are some examples for illustration.

- Comparing similarities and differences in two cultures was constantly raised in my respondents' personal observations. For one example, Selina offered her comparison of two cultures on a macro basis, "the two cultures are in many ways similar as well as different… I think people can find more differences at first. For example, different languages, different traditions, and history can also produce lots of differences in customs, and ways of treating people. Just as a simple example, Chinese people use chopsticks, while Westerners use forks and knives; Chinese may make some sounds when they eat, to show their satisfaction with food, while Westerners may consider that as impolite and they close their mouth when eating. But those are just observation on the surface. Other differences… over here, the legal system and social warfare system are relatively more effective. Besides, the society is relatively wealthier, which are reflected in its rich natural resources and considerable investments, plus, the population is relatively small… while China, first it is a developing country, second the average per

capita resources including various resources, like educational resources in China is much less. Competition happens in any area of life, even food supply, even educational resources. So it is understandable that you can see these differences through phenomena. I also see the difference as reflected in people's attitude toward aging. Old people, I mean when people are over their sixties, in Canada, old people do not seem to be as old as old people in China. They can still live an energetic and young life. And people seem to be more accommodating, about life and everything… I believe all these phenomena have something to do with its broadness and resourcefulness. But due to its unique national conditions, Chinese appears more gravitation toward collectivism… Similarities, to be frank, I feel that human nature is universally similar. You can find introverted or extroverted people anywhere, regardless of what societies or which countries they are from. For example, it is considered a virtue to respect the aged and love the young in any culture. As another example, malicious competitions among people happen in the offices everywhere." (Selina)

- From a unique angle, my respondents such as Cathy and Rachael compared how the physical construct of communities in two cultures can influence people's living, physically and psychologically. For example, they commented, "back in China, if you look at the physical aspect of a neighborhood, you don't have a big space for anything, for example, you will not be able to clearly define an area for public use. But, in a small closed compound, you can meet lots of people. So you can have a chat with people if you want to, this is due to the density in the residential living area. You will not find it difficult to find someone to chat, children also find other kids easily" (Cathy), and "China

usually uses compact design for communities. So the density of people in the community makes it easy for people to get to know each other" (Rachael), while "but the single-house community in Canada is popular and typical, and scattered… They like single houses, due to their value of privacy, people like single house, and they do not like to be disturbed in their life. But this can cause contradiction. They have to have a community center, so people and kids have a place to go. … Because you have to go to community center, or you can hardly see any people in the neighborhood if the density in the neighborhood is very low" (Cathy), and "Canada also recognized the effect of its geographical feature, for example, community usually occupies a big land and very scattered. Besides, the design of the road depends on the vehicle transportation" (Rachael).

- As one of the most intensely discussed topic, the school learning in schools in two cultures has been given lots of comparisons by my respondents, although some of the comparisons could be based on misunderstanding. For one example, Laura mentioned because Canada has only several hundred years of history, compared with over five thousands' years of history in China, "Canadian kids do not have to carry the burden of thousands of years of culture in their learning. So they can be more relaxed and have time to concentrate on learning new things through play and exploration" (Laura). For another example, Eva offered her comparison in terms of the division of responsibilities between school and parents, and she said, "many Chinese parents often say to the teachers or the school "I am now handing kids over to school," which has the implication that school will teach knowledge of all kinds, including how to become a good person and a useful

person in the world. So at home, parents mainly supervise them doing homework. But over here, it seems to me that school does not teach them the principles or doctrines to be a person of good virtue. All this work thus is placed on parents' shoulders. So comparatively, Chinese parents in China do not need to exhaust themselves in repeating and teaching kids those principles again" (Eva). For yet another example, in terms of how different types of education can shape difference in children, Selina sought to compare the type of education she received in the past in China with what she perceived the current practice in Canadian schools. She said, "the type of education carried out in my childhood, may be referred to as aptitude education (She used the Chinese term *zi zhi jiao yu*). It stressed the academic performance. And it stressed to foster obedience in kids. So kids wouldn't question and they would be committed to striving for good marks in all subjects learning. But over here, they truly give more attention to quality education (She used the Chinese term *su zhi jiao yu*). I mean, they recognize uniqueness. For example, some kids can be strong in leadership and some others can be good followers or working partners. Kids therefore develop their unique personalities" (Selina). Similarly, Eva also said, "In China, academic excellence is the only standard for a successful child… while over here, for example, from the report card, you can tell if the kid has received good marks. But then, you can also see that their judgment of a kid, they look at many things besides academic performance" (Eva). In terms of teachers' attitude toward students' improper behaviour in schools in two cultures, Eva said, "if you put your feet on the edge of the table, you will be told that is not the right school behaviour. But if the same thing happens in the school here, they may think that is your freedom. Teachers do not seem to

care about it. Teachers may think they are teaching knowledge and they respect kids that way" (Eva).

- The influence of traditional values on childrearing practice proved to be another source of comparison. For one example, Yulian raised the point that the value of honouring the family can lead Chinese students to choose to learn and to work for the sake of satisfying their parents, their teachers and the overall public interest, and she said, "the kind of practical thinking is not rare among Chinese parents. And teachers and parents will be very proud if their students or kids are in IT or in banking field. Even if you are talented in linguistics, the school climate, the family climate, or even the broader social climate, will not encourage that" (Yulian), while "I see many excellent students among Westerners. My general impression is, if they have interest in writing or art, they can go further down the road. They can be very committed to their personal pursuit. Actually they have this educational system that encourages kids to develop their personal interest" (Eva). For another example, in terms of independence and self-reliance, Laura made a comparison between two Canadian young people working in her office with a Chinese young man who counted on his parents for his post-graduate study, and she said, "the two students in our office, they are part-time, they are very independent, indeed… You do not find many independent kids in China. But over here, it is not rare. The point is, it is not the family that forced them to be so, but they chose to" (Laura).

- Selina has given a comparison of how parents in two cultures expect from the children concerning their life choice. She said: "in my original culture, I think the stress is on competencies… that parents want to see their children eventually climb up the social

ladder (she used the Chinese idiom *wang zi cheng long and wang nv cheng feng*, which literally means to expect to see the son or the daughter to become a dragon or a phoenix—the symbol of being successful). The want to see their children to become the best among the best (Chinese term: *ren shang ren*). Living in this culture… I feel the life here, because a person can live the way he wants to live, because people allow him that freedom, he can choose the life he wants to live" (Selina).

- Concerning participation in OST activities, some of my respondents approached the topic by comparing how they filled their out-of-school time with activities in their childhood and what they observed about OST activities for their children. For example, Selina mentioned in her childhood, "I do not remember if there were kind of activities that could be strictly called *ke wai huo dong*… The kinds of play we usually did were actually self-invented sports games, such as playing balls, kicking the shuttlecock, jumping the elastic bands, rolling hoops, tossing sandbags, playing with slingshot and playing marbles, and many more," while "but I feel over here, they seem to stress the difference between girls and boys. The kind of sports they are promoting, including the extracurricular activities they choose, seem to me that they are very conscious of what are appropriate for girls and what are appropriate for boys. They intentionally guide boys and girls to different directions" (Selina).

- Some of my respondents compared the purpose of children's participation in OST programs in two cultures. For one example, "based on my observation, I can see that in Canada, they provide kids lots of programs with various purposes. But the primary purpose is to enrich their life. Comparatively, Chinese kids have to work long hours on

> their academic study, they almost have no time for their own. And the thing is, the extracurricular activities for Chinese kids in China, have become a must, an academic enhancer, and a means to beat others (in all kinds of competitions). The purpose is not to enrich or entertain, nor to let kids play. . . . it turns out that if you can play piano. . . . people will say, wow, that kid is really something, or that kid is up to certain levels of piano playing" (Cathy).

Evaluation

Evaluation is found to occur when my respondents made comparisons as well as when they had to make choices in their lives. However, it is likely that their evaluation was based on their own perceived pros and cons of the situation and was made without too much prior knowledge about the new culture and new systems. Examples are given below:

- When comparing the physical construct of communities in the two cultures, Cathy and Rachael at the same time evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of living in communities in China and Canada. For example, "in the opinion of an urban designer, we say, like, Chinese cul-de-sac gives more taste of neighborhood living" (Cathy) and "China usually uses compact design for communities. So the density of people in the community makes it easy for people to get to know each other" (Rachael), while "such features [in Canadian communities] may have caused the isolation, physically and psychologically. Certainly it will affect people's interaction with each other" (Rachael).

- From time to time, my respondents evaluated pros and cons of two educational systems. Especially the question of whether to go with "play and learn" philosophy or "learn and play" philosophy presents a reality demanding a choice from most of the Chinese

immigrant parents in this study. As a matter of fact, quite a few statements were demonstrating that my respondents involved in evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of this two pedagogical philosophies in school education which happens to parallel the differences in childrearing beliefs in two cultures. For one example, “they [Canadian schools] give kids lots of time to play. Kids learn and at the same time they get enough play. That is to say, kids learn from play. They foster, not feed those knowledge in kids” (Cathy). For another example, in relation to teaching method, one respondent mentioned that Chinese teaching method is mainly duck-feed, which is a “traditional type of teaching” (Laura), while “children over here, although they play a lot, they can really learn things” (Laura). Regarding teacher-student relationship, “in Chinese schools, it is rare that teachers will interact with students and treat them like friends. Sometimes, teachers here even come to you and chat with you. This is rare in French schools or in Chinese schools. Students fear teachers there” (Laura). When talking about how school arrangement can affect students’ learning, Laura evaluated the arrangement of mandatory exercises during recess time in Chinese elementary schools such as *ke jian cao* (a kind of setting-up exercise during the break, mandatory for all students to participate) and *yan bao jian cao* (eye care exercise during recess time) are “very scientific” and “that is something schools here should also adopt. I myself have benefited from doing those exercises. They give your body and your eyes some rest and good exercise, which allows you more energy afterwards” (Laura). In terms of how school can shape the moral quality of children, Eva mentioned that in Chinese schools an effort is made to instill in children some of the valuable life philosophy, “we all know from very young age that if you work at it hard enough, you can grind an iron bar into a fine needle (here she borrowed from

the Chinese saying that *zhi yao gong fu shen, tie chu mo cheng zhen*). Those stories, we learned at very young age, are actually good moral lessons for children. We learned from textbooks, and we also learned from teachers" (Eva).

- In the light of their childhood experiences, one of my respondents also evaluated the advantages of being bilingual. For example, "that gave me advantages when interacting with people from mainland China as well as people from Hong Kong. To be bilingual or even multilingual, you have more chances to make friends with people from diverse cultural background and you have good tools to get to know this world. And of course, more jobs will also be available to you" (Cathy).
- Evaluation was also found to occur when OST choices need to be made. For one example, the topic "whether children should play a musical instrument?" has triggered quite a few comments from my respondents. As some of the respondents expressed disagreement for leaning musical instruments at an early age (e.g., Selina mentioned "it may not be good for their body growth… Take violin for example, the neck and the arm are usually made to be in a rather awkward position. Nobody can be used to it at the beginning, especially for young children. Children can easily feel tired. And if you force them to continue, this may damp their interest in the long run"), some others listed long-term advantages associated with learning musical instruments (e.g., Music can foster good dispositions and perseverance, can work on intelligence, can keep children away from rudeness, can help build up good working habits and self-discipline).

The evaluations made by my respondents might not be based on a holistic view of the situation, yet they are self-justified and supportive to what these parents chose to do.

Clarification

In this study, the need for clarification arose when certain obstacles appeared to hamper my respondents' understanding and clarification was shown to be a means to reduce ambiguity and to remove misunderstanding. As a matter of fact, this stage was found to be particularly pronounced in relation to childrearing beliefs and practices. This can be exemplified in the following examples.

- The media tells people about other cultures but it can be very misleading, according to Wendong. His personal experiences and observations showed him a different picture, "before I moved to Canada, I learned about Canadian and American cultures mainly through media, such as films and newspapers. I, maybe also many other Chinese parents held such an idea that parents in Western countries like Canada and American, do not *guan* (a Chinese word with a connotation of training and managing) their kids. Like, as long as the kids reach eighteen years old, they will be kicked out of their home and become independent, and are not supposed to rely on parents anymore, so they will be completely the owner of their own life. . . . But based on what I have experienced and observed in this country, I now feel this is a misunderstanding, at least this is not the case for all parents over here." Besides, "… but what I have mentioned above doesn't necessarily prove that parents over here do not care about children's learning at all, as what I believed before. On the contrary, they also care about their children's academic performance. Their commitment to children's education is no less than our Chinese parents, I can tell" (Wendong).

- Chinese parents were generally described to be particularly performance-oriented toward academic studies in literature. However, personal observations of my respondents seem to have shown that this is a biased judgment. For one example, “we Chinese used to think Westerners do not care about kids’ school marks… yeah, they do not talk about it, but they say they must find a school “that fits my child.” Chinese parents choose schools, choose teachers, Western parents are doing the same thing. The explanation for this seems universal, because good schools and good teachers can help children build up on their strength and overcome their weakness…” (Eva). As another example, “there must be some parents among Westerners who, like what people usually describe about Chinese parents, care about kids’ academic performances. So I come to the understanding that, wherever you go, whichever country you are living in, you will see the kind of differences that separate some from others. Just that in Canadian society, there are differences in views between educated and less educated people, although there are some commonly acknowledged norms for all. But based on my personal experience, I can tell that the way I bring up my children and the beliefs I hold about education are not strange to Canadian parents with quite the same educational background. Intelligence and proper education always prove to be useful and important for the same reason” (Selina).
- Yulian’s work experience in Canada triggered her attempt to clarify some of her misunderstandings about human nature in general, “I, like many other Chinese people, used to think that Westerners are comparatively more honest and frank about their opinions and Chinese like to wind their ways around the topic and are more reserved when it comes to showing feelings. But I actually do not feel that way now. Perhaps it is a difference between individuals more than a difference between cultures. Besides, I

cannot remember who said that Chinese are calculating and Westerners are forthright or outspoken. That is not the case either. In the office, Westerners also have politics… So if you say the two cultures are very different, I feel this point of view need to be adjusted. Differences exist more between people of classes" (Yulian).

Although some of the clarifications seem to over-generalize what is meant to be the differences between individuals, this stage opens a path for communication on the same page between cultures for my respondents.

Reflection

Often in a person's life, occasions such as a change to the routine, a break from continuity, an event, disapproval, and a comparison can make one to reflect on the taken-for-granted assumption and look into what is behind the surface. This is also the case with immigrant Chinese parents in this study. Here are some examples.

- It is shown that the changes in everyday life caused reflection in my respondents. For example, immigration turns out to be a good test for life skills and provides a chance for immigrants, immigrant mothers in particular, to make up for a lesson in life competency. Eventually my respondents have come to the point that being capable in just work and study is "not enough for a person's full life." It happened that Laura at another occasion made the similar reflection, "he [a child of one of her old colleagues] may be good at academic study, but certainly, he lacks the life competence. I mean the ability to make a living. That is not helping with his future life" (Laura).
- Having experienced the transition from living in a mono-culture to living in a multicultural community, Selina offered her reflection of her childhood community environment: "I spent my childhood days in a relatively pure and simple environment

with little influence from the outside secular culture. I say it was simple, because it was kind of closed and mono-cultural. And the type of people I came in contact with were also kind of uniformed. This, I say, has both positive and negative sides. Because of its simplicity, my knowledge about the complicatedness of the world was never sufficient. It took me much more time to learn the life in the outside world. And in retrospect, that simplicity, I feel is not the same as accommodating or being open. Only after I have experienced many encounters during and after immigration, I have been learning to be accommodating. . . . Because over here this is a multicultural society, with multi-ethnicities, multi-classes, and multi-educational backgrounds" (Selina).

- Their perceived drop in social status in the new context led to insightful reflection in my respondents. For example, "my previous life experience, due to my living environment, I had a bit of blind self-pride. Because I have had a life that could be considered middle or upper class standard, say, I had good income, well-educated background, and received due respect. These factors built in me the blind self-pride…so I never took initiatives to learn or show enough care to people of other classes or people living at the bottom of the society. So after coming to Canada, I was kind of falling to the bottom of the society myself, this allowed me to get to know how people of low social class are living, their life could be more miserable than us immigrants. For immigrants, in the first several years, they may experience a sudden drop in their income as well as socio-economic status. But I feel, in the long run, what they have experienced will prove to enrich their life experience" (Selina).
- Some of my respondents also reflected on the negative sides of the influence of original culture, which usually can happen when one has the chance to jump out of the

accustomed life circle and look back. Take Wendong's words for example, "there are many social problems now in China, which to great degree reflect the failure of Chinese education. The distortion of people's values, the pursuit of fame and power, many family tragedies, bizarre and strange sights, I sometimes can hardly believe all these happen in a country with the longest history of civilization. We have to ask, what kind of people Chinese educational system are producing—maybe people with beautiful marks on the paper, or people who can bring pride to the family, but people without a healthy mind, and eventually, that messed-up mind leads to a messed-up world view and life. The forty years of China's opening to the outside world, how much conscientiousness has lost at the same time" (Wendong). For another example, Tina reflected on a phenomenon brought forward by a media article about the perceived success of Indian people in the work place in North America. She attributed this phenomenon to the cultural reasons, "Chinese value compliance, which stresses to accept what the authority makes you do, on the other hand, leadership or skills related to proper and equal people relationship are not treated as important, and also we are not properly taught how to socialize without losing your self-esteem. This is rooted in the way we deal with our work, people around us and even the world. Even today, we are allowed some power and control of our own life, and the world is more humane, but this value of compliance is in the root" (Tina).

- Experience with barriers in communication with people from different cultural backgrounds has also triggered reflection in my respondents. For example, "although you can also find people of like mind here, the reason lies in personality not culture, still, if you think then I can make lots of local Canadian friends, I feel that is not as easy as

making friends with Chinese people. Because with Chinese people, you can just sit down and you have many topics to talk about. It takes much longer time to find a friend among Westerners. And you also can find lots of things you are unable to communicate. This may be due to cultural difference. Understandably, our interests, our way of liking things, our socio-economic base, our childhood, these things all connect with culture. You don't have this communication gap as huge among Chinese people" (Eva).

- Some of my respondents also reflected on the issues related to parenting. For one example. Selina talked about what she learned about Chinese parenting, "I heard many Chinese parents are exhausting themselves taking kids to all kinds of supplementary learning programs, like English, math, Chinese, science. They register kids in many *bu xi ban* (This is a Chinese term for extra lessons in after school hours). And kids, based on my observation, some of them can carry out what parents expect them to do. And they are doing very good jobs. But many other kids, they are tired of such busy arrangement; they feel upset. But they dare not to say or do anything to upset their parents. I feel this is actually suppressing kids' nature" (Selina). For another example, some of my respondents made a good reflection on the fundamental role of parents. Selina said, "what I am thinking is that, we cannot just rely on the schools or the extracurricular activities. I believe parents play a bigger role. That means, first, you yourself need to have interest in lots of things, have passion for yet-to-be-discovered, have willingness to participate, even when you are not sure or do not know too much yourself. I think you as parents have greater influence on your kids" (Selina). For still another example, encountering an unfamiliar cultural environment different from the one they were raised in, many of my

respondents came to reflect on the meaning of success and successful children. Eva commented, “in Chinese educational system, the standard used to judge a child being successful or not is whether he listens to the teachers’ instructions, whether he is doing what the teachers ask him to do. So he may be excellent in taking exams and he may get good marks. But when he is doing all this, he is losing other things, like doing things creatively… so learning in this environment relieves the pressure of striving for good marks. So that also frees parents from that pressure to some extent and allows them to focus on meaningful things in children’s overall development and education” (Eva).

- Thoughtfully, some parents in this study made reflections on the phenomenon of overscheduling children’s out of school time with school-like activities and how that impacted on the lives of parents as well as children. Selina commented, “I heard many Chinese parents are exhausting themselves taking kids to all kinds of supplementary learning programs, like English, math, Chinese, science. They register kids in many after school lessons. And kids, based on my observation, some of them can carry out what parents expect them to do. And they are doing very good jobs. But many other kids, they are tired of such busy arrangement, they feel upset. But they dare not to do or say anything to upset their parents. I feel this is suppressing kids’ nature (Selina). Similarly, when mentioning what she learnt from friends back in China, Tina also touched upon this phenomenon. She said, “from their talk, I have this impression that children back in China are just too busy, busy with school and busy with all kinds of OST activities. But all what they are doing or what their parents want them to do is for the purpose of moving up to good schools” (Tina).

Selection

Selection occurs in several circumstances. First, when my respondents were confronted with an array of possibilities, i.e. selecting from a variety of school forms—public schools, private school, French immersion schools, science schools and other forms of school organizations, they need to exercise their caution and make reasonable choices for their children to the best of their knowledge. For another example, in terms of children's participation in OST activities, Selina purposefully selected sport programs for her two boys, "because I believe only with good physical health, can they eat well and sleep well. And then they can study well. So in the first place, I want them to involve in sports activities" (Selina). For still another example, out of numerous OST choices, Eva focused her attention on selecting three things for children: a sport program, a musical instrument and Chinese learning, which are used to foster various wanted qualities in children. In Wendong's case, he selected a drama program for his child with the purpose to help the child with his expressiveness and confidence. Secondly, when there are unfavorable conditions in life (e.g., the physical construct of communities in Canada limits children's chances to make friends) and negative influences from children's schooling and society at large, my respondents were shown to select from available strategies (e.g., enrolling children in OST activities to allow them to team with healthy positive kids; "to expose children to as many activities as possible at young age" (Laura)) for solutions. Third, selection was also shown to go along with the need to be culturally and contextually appropriate (Lim & Wieling, 2004). For example, my respondents selected from Western style parenting the components that they considered good and reasonable. Wendong commented, "we need to learn to encourage children more often. I see parents here never stingy in telling their children 'good job, good try,

you are great' etc. Chinese parents comparatively are too strict… I do think we can learn from Western parents' positive and encouraging attitude" (Wendong).

Movement

Having gone through some of the stages or all of the stages mentioned above, my respondents somewhat demonstrated that they have arrived at or were arriving at the stage that quite a few prior studies have described to be the shifts, changes and modifications (e.g., Chao, 1996, 2000; Kelley & Tsang, 1992; Lim & Lim, 2003; Lin & Fu, 1990) in these immigrant parents' beliefs and practices. To be more specific, I detected at least three categories of movement. First, they moved toward appreciating or accepting some or components of some Western cultural practices while maintaining some of their beliefs and practices from indigenous Chinese culture. This trend, therefore, results in the integration of or coexistence of Chinese and Western cultural practices, which to a certain extent is in line with what the popularly adopted models of heterogeneous and conditional adaptation (Gans, 1997; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1997a) have suggested: among other things, effective adaptation can occur without fully relinquishing native cultural practices. Besides, prior research findings associated with bicultural individuals who are found to be able to switch between collectivistic and individualistic modes (Cross & Markus, 1991) have also rendered support for the notion of blending but not necessarily replacing. For one example, when being sought what education systems in two cultures can learn from each other, almost all of my respondents stressed the importance of laying a solid foundation in academics, while at the same time, stress was also given to creative learning (e.g., through play) and space for personal pursuit. For another example, although Suzuki (1980) has previously suggested that the Chinese worldview and orientation toward children is more

pragmatic and moralistic than psychological, in this study, evidence can be found that psychological health (e.g., to make them happy; to use music as an emotional outlet for feelings) has already been given priority by these Chinese immigrant parents when they meanwhile still stress the fostering of moral quality in their children. For still another example, when academic excellence was still considered one of the components of standard for being successful children by some of my respondents, they at the same time raised their eyesight to other competencies as well, i.e. socializing ability (e.g., the ability to communicate and team work) and independent problem solving ability.

Second, they departed the traditional Chinese way of childrearing and moved toward a new and rounded way of childrearing, which manifested itself as a modification of traditional cultural practice (e.g., Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). For example, having had to face the test on their life skills after immigration to Canada, shifts in the goals of socialization (e.g., Roer-Stier et al., 2001) were detected when some of my respondents, particularly mothers came to the conclusion that being capable in work and study is “not enough for a person’s full life.” For another example, in terms of perceiving self and others, several of my respondents have demonstrated a movement toward being more open and accommodating compared with their own past, which can certainly attribute to the influence of diversity of a multicultural society. This movement is also manifested through the fact that these parents came to realize the ways to raise children and the ways to reach academic success can be diverse. For example, Selina demonstrated her flexibility of allowing her children the freedom of trying a variety of readings instead of restricting them to only subject-learning books. Concerning the choice of OST programs for children, Laura’s talk also drew my attention. She said she had wanted her child to go to a Drama camp, but after talking with the child she changed her mind. She said,

> You know, to learn drama, you learn to talk in front of people, and you need to perform on the stage. But I talked this to Kelley, and she said, "I do not want to talk in front of so many people." If that's the case, I feel I should not push her too much, because I know she is an exceptionally shy kid. It takes time for her to build up this open attitude and daringness. So I decide not to register her in the program. I do not want her to feel embarrassed. (Laura)

Laura's democratic and patient attitude somewhat departs from that of traditional Chinese parenting which is usually characterized with strictness and control in prior studies (e.g., Chao, 1994; Ho, 1986; Kelley & Tsang, 1992; Lin & Fu, 1990). Similarly, when talking what OST activities to choose for her children, Eva also demonstrated this movement toward a more democratic parental attitude. She said,

> if, for example, learning piano, I have to see if they have that interest. If they have no interest at all, I will not force them to do it. No matter how much benefit kids can get from learning, if they have no interest, that will become something of little value or interest (Here she used a Chinese term *ji lei*, which literally means chicken rib. The term was derived from a story in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* describing someone or something that appears to be very smart or very valuable, but in fact of little use in practical reality). (Eva)

Third, they revisited some important Chinese traditions and values, which differ, at least partially, from how some Western scholars (e.g., Foner, 1997) have suggested that immigrants continue to draw on their pre-migration cultural frameworks as they carve out their new lives. I use the term "revisit" because some of the Chinese traditions (e.g., Confucian teachings associated with filial piety and the importance of teachers) which used to be predominant in the

society have experienced discontinuation in the mid-20th century because of internal turmoil like the Chinese Cultural Revolution as well as the adoption of a market economy in China. Moving out of the inland of China, immigrant Chinese might have found some social conditions which could provide fertile ground for the resurge and renewal of some traditional values and practices. For example, revisiting family values is particularly pronounced among my respondents. When seeking answers to why some children can go to so many OST activities while other children cannot, responses from these parents made me feel I should give due attention to the role of grandparents in these Chinese immigrants' families aside from factors such as parents socioeconomic status and availability of other resources in life. Several respondents mentioned that it was great to have grandparents stay with them, although there were sometimes small conflicts because of a divergence in life habits and needs, or disagreement with childrearing beliefs. Just a little help such as washing dishes, doing the laundry, or telling stories to children or just keep an eye on them relieved much of the burden from the tired shoulders of these Chinese immigrant parents. Laura used the word "greatest" to stress the change in her family life due to her revisiting of the importance of some family values. Undoubtedly, due to the particular situations some immigrant families were confronting, some immigrants might begin to reconsider the importance of family integrity, which gives the chance for traditional family values to regain their position and strength and which may cast a certain influence on the next generation as to how to understand the traditional Chinese value of filial piety.

In the section above, I have made an attempt to clarify what a complex process of multiple stages my respondents have gone through. And it is clear that they have come to a stage that should be viewed through a lens that is neither from an angle of their "old world" nor from the "new

world;" it may be helpful for us to take into consideration the changing conditions of both worlds. In the following, I come to explicate the manifested results in the area of OST choices of how this process is subtly shaping parents' minds in the childrearing sphere.

Out-of-school (OST) activities arrangement: Understanding, the pattern, multiple functions, and premises and conditions for decisions on children's participation in OST activities

From the first major finding I discussed above, it became obvious to me that parents' strategic considerations around the use of OST activities did not come overnight. Rather, factors from all sources and ecological systems are like trickling drops of water that eventually evolve into streams of influences on the mind of these immigrant parents. These influences have manifested themselves in the following four interrelated OST activities associated findings: 1) A hybrid understanding of OST activities; 2) A pattern of OST activities arrangement; 3) Multiple dimensions of functions of out-of-school (OST) activities; and 4) Three dimensions of premises and conditions for parents' decisions on children's participation in OST activities.

A hybrid understanding of OST

I use the word "hybrid" to indicate that first, immigrant Chinese parents in this study have demonstrated an understanding of OST that does not go with any one certain definition of OST that I have reviewed in the previous chapter, and second, their understanding of OST in many ways connects with and is influenced by their personal experiences and past as well as present practices of OST in China as well as in Canada.

These two points direct attention to the comprehensive nature of their understanding of OST. As a matter of fact, these immigrant parents' understanding of OST activities seem to show that elements from the Chinese concept of *ke wai huo dong* (a Chinese interpretation of OST activities), elements from the concept of *extended learning time (ELT)*, and elements from the

concept of *expanded learning opportunities (ELO)* are adopted and fused together into parents' conception of OST. The Chinese immigrant parents in this study ranged from 28 to 40 in their age at the time of interviews. Based on the age range, the parents' childhood years can be dated back to 20 to 30 years ago, which falls around the same period that *ke wai huo dong* regained attention to formalize the role of *ke wai huo dong* in a relatively loosely defined school curriculum (e.g., Lian, 1993, 1995; Wong, 1994) and expanded into practical as well as experiential learning opportunities after being marginalized for a while.

Additionally, the parents' understanding of OST activities diverges. For example, Chinese immigrant parents in this study who spent childhood years in the countryside (e.g., in Laura's and Selina's case) demonstrated a different way of understanding OST activities from those who were raised in urban areas in China. In Laura's case, her response to the kind of OST activities she used to have included "playing with kids in the village in the Japanese banana forest along the river and swimming back and forth from school." In Selina's case, her understanding of OST activities also came directly from her life experience:

> In my childhood, I do not remember there were kind of activities that could be strictly called *ke wai huo dong* (a Chinese interpretation of OST activities). Kids were just like playing freely and wildly (here she used a Chinese term *fang yang* which literally means letting sheep out to pasture)… The kinds of play we usually did were actually self-invented sport games, such as playing balls, kicking the shuttlecock, jumping the elastic bands, rolling hoops, tossing sandbags, playing with slingshot and playing marbles, and many more. (Selina)

While some other respondents such as Yulian, Cathy, Rachael, Yani and Wendong who were raised up in cities in China reported that they once engaged in some kind of afterschool

OST activities, supervised as well as unsupervised. In a way, the school or organizations could take a part or not take a part in the implementation of the OST activities my respondents have experienced. Besides, in addition to formal lessons and programs from outside resources, the parents in this study also mentioned other activities in which they themselves and their children were engaged, e.g., children's home-learning in the subject areas such as math, English, and Chinese under the help of the parents, running, camping, travelling, gardening, reading, and so on. Another fact I have noticed is that none of the parents ever distinguish "structured activities" with "non-structured activities," or "supervised activities" with "non-supervised activities." Also, these parents did not seem to bother with who should be the "legitimate provider" for OST activities. These are actually in consistency with how Chinese usually define *ke wai huo dong*. In a sense, their interpretations of OST encompass some of the important components of free play—a concept in contemporary Western scholarship that is usually associated with child-driven, unsupervised imaginary activities.

In a word, the kind of understanding of OST activities that my respondents have demonstrated integrates the Chinese and Canadian interpretations of OST from both the narrow sense and the broad sense and thus have a broader inclusion of types of activities and provider of activities, and more flexibility in the location and time for activities.

Although immigrant parents in this study demonstrated a divergent understanding of OST activities, this does not lead them to a choice of OST arrangement away from a general pattern.

A pattern of OST activities arrangement

Returning to my data analysis, I recorded how Eva has made her principles of choosing the right OST activities for her children. She said:

> Although I wasn't familiar with the resources about OST activities over here in Calgary, I had in my mind a principle that I would arrange my kids to do three things: playing a musical instrument (or other types of art in other cases), participating in a sport program, plus learning Chinese. (Eva)

Interestingly, this pattern in OST arrangement has become a norm for all parents in this study. To be more specific, this pattern is a good manifestation of integration of four of my sub-findings. First, the choice of art (including playing a musical instrument, learning vocal lessons, drawing, dancing etc.) as one of the must-to-choose OST activities has somewhat reflected these parents' prior knowledge from their original culture. Second, the stress upon the importance of learning Chinese reflects these parents' pragmatic concerns about maintaining Chinese identity and heritage in children, and arming children with bilingual capability in order to better cope with the reality and the future competition. Third, certain choices of the types of OST activities reflect my respondents' adaptive move to adjust in the Canadian context as well as pragmatic considerations. Last, this pattern of OST activities does not seem to completely match my respondents' self-reported understanding of the competencies valued in the current society they are living in, which may be greatly due to their unfamiliarity with Canadian social systems and unawareness of certain resources and likely language barrier.

In terms of enrolling children in music lessons, although immediate reasons vary, for example, some parents hoped to realize their childhood dreams through their children (e.g., in Eva's case), some parents followed suit (e.g., Ying's case), and some other parents could have pragmatic considerations (e.g., in Selina's case), it is worthy of mentioning that my second interview saw all children take lessons in learning to play a kind of musical instrument. This makes me wonder why parents including those who in my first interview reported not ready to

enrol their children in music lessons out of certain considerations (e.g., Wendong's comment about parents' genetic defect and Selina's stress on boy's physical health) eventually all conformed to the trend. Plus, enrolling children in other kinds of art lessons such as drawing and dancing is also a common practice among these parents. As I found out at the beginning of my data collection, these parents were all well-educated Chinese, which means that they could have a good knowledge about the intellectual's practice espoused in Chinese traditional culture and the practice around building quality education popular among Chinese parents, living in China and abroad. As some Western scholars have revealed in their studies that Asian students have been reported high level of participation in music lessons and educational activities than White students, which might be motivated in part by cultural values (Kao, 1995; Schneider & Lee, 1990), inevitably, this drew my attention to the part of Chinese cultural traditions that are most relevant. Commonly known to almost all Chinese, including myself, the most noble, traditional and distinguished way of showing a person's wit and civilization as a person of learning is to master four arts or four types of artistic skills, namely *qin qi shu hua* (Chinese: **琴、棋、**书、画四种技艺). The four arts dictate four main accomplishments required of the Chinese scholars, which are ***qin*** (the guqin, a stringed instrument), ***qi*** (the strategy game of Go), ***shu*** (Chinese calligraphy) and ***hua*** (Chinese painting). Although in a modern world, the criteria for a person of learning could be pretty diversified (e.g., to be multilingual, to be able to play piano or violin, to have a doctoral degree etc.), this traditional Chinese idea is so deeply rooted in and supported by Chinese culture and is influencing Chinese way of parenting. Although it is not known if the Chinese immigrant parents in this study fully comprehend the original purposes of these four arts which can be traced back to around 6th century BC, their practice in regard to choosing art lessons for their children perfectly shows the impact of the respect that Chinese

culture has rendered to the well-educated, the highly spiritual and the noble morals because of the extremely high demands the mastery of four arts has put on a person, e.g., intellectual wit, perseverance, Daoist attainments and aesthetic quality. Although the types of musical instruments or the content of drawing appear to take on different forms in Canadian context, I assume the goals on parents' mind are rather Chinese culturally bound. Just to look at my respondents' reasons for engaging their children in learning music: to enrich children's lives; to use music as a spiritual harbor; to help children to become self-disciplined and morally constrained; to train them to be patient with delayed reward (e.g., mastery in music and delight brought to them and others); and to keep them away from rudeness and vulgar behaviour or people through developing a self-consciousness and so on. On another note, although the concept of quality education itself is interpreted in a rather ambiguous way in Chinese context (please refer to my literature review), as a popular recognition among Chinese overseas parents, quality education has been compressed into this equation:

Quality education=Learning Chinese + Playing a musical instrument (or drawing or other fine arts) + Sports

Although this equation may attract critical questions, it has found support in the practice of the parents in this study. In a word, these Chinese immigrant parents' prior knowledge from their original culture and current knowledge about popular practice among Chinese parents have been casting important influence on the pattern of children's OST activities arrangement.

Learning Chinese is unquestionably a crucial choice for my respondents. As shown in my data analysis, these parents expressed desires about maintaining Chinese identity and heritage in their children, and arming children with bilingual capability. In addition, some pragmatic

concerns are salient, such as learning Chinese in order to allow children better cope with the reality and future competition.

Other than the cultural influence mentioned above, the adaptive move to adjust in the Canadian context and some pragmatic considerations are also evident in the self-reported thoughts of my respondents, which play a role in the pattern of OST arrangement. For one example, some parents constantly mentioned, “if children do not learn things like snowboarding, skating or hockey, what else you can let them do for this long winter?” Since participation in sports such as soccer, skating and skiing is actually not very popular among children in China, such an attitude toward winter sports popular in Canada therefore can, to some extent, reflect parents and children’s effort in adapting themselves to their new environment.

Equally important to note, this pattern of OST activities does not seem to completely match my respondents’ self-reported understanding of the competencies valued in the current society they are living in, such as social ability, particularly independent life skills and people relationship skills, problem solving and the leadership quality. To relate to my explication about the stages of the process Chinese immigrant parents in this study have gone through, this phenomenon may be greatly due to their unfamiliarity with the Canadian social systems, unawareness of certain resources and likely language barriers. Such a concern is not verified in this study, yet it should be noted that most of my respondents even never heard about the youth organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H clubs, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Girl Guides, etc., not to mention to even think about sending their children to those programs provided by these youth organizations. Although some of these youth organizations have put fostering social skills and leadership quality in the future responsible citizens as their priority, without distinctive qualitative programs and without effective

promotional strategies to new-comers, it can be expected that youth organizations may not be as competitive in the "market" as private organizers or municipal organizers. But still this also means these youth programs have a big space to expand if they want to share part of the "market."

Multiple functions of out-of-school (OST) activities

As prior studies have convinced us that participation in OST activities can benefit youth physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally and academically (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005; Simpkins, Little, & Weiss, 2004), this idea was also supported by the respondents in this study through their practice associated with putting children in various kinds of OST activities. However, the self-reported stories and descriptions of these Chinese immigrant parents made me realize that the OST activities in these immigrant Chinese parents' childrearing blueprint appeared to have carried on interconnected multiple functions which, based on my data and analysis, range from child-focused functions (*developing domain-specific skills and qualities in children, fostering qualities or virtues, competencies and overall development),* to learning- and future career-focused functions *(complementary to school education and extending school education to a broader life arena, and meeting pragmatic concerns),* and to parenting-focused functions *(exercising parents' educational beliefs, and creating a normal life for children).*

• Developing domain-specific skills and qualities in children

The immediate and obvious explanation for the fact that all immigrant Chinese parents in this study sent their children to certain OST activities lies in their need to train and develop certain skills in children. Take playing musical instruments for example. Some parents believed playing piano might be helpful in training the coordination of brain, hands, and feet. Some others

believed violin was a good tool to train the dexterity of fingers as well as memorization. Another observation is that some respondents showed they were not satisfied with just the training of basic level skills (e.g., Ying and Eva talked about why they did not prefer to enrol their children in programs provided by YWCA). Rather, these parents goal expectancy was on helping their children accomplish certain levels of skills.

• Fostering qualities or virtues, competencies and overall development in children

It occurs to me that Chinese immigrant parents in this study were well aware of the linkage between participation in activities outside regular school hours and developing the whole being of their children. For one example, it was constantly stated by my respondents that activities such as playing musical instruments could foster traits and qualities necessary in strengthening academic competence as well as other virtues such as confidence, perseverance, openness, daringness, and diligence. For another example, learning Chinese was believed by my respondents to be a very necessary and effective way to foster the quality of filial piety in their children, since “I believe only traditional Chinese culture can foster such virtue in young people” (Selina). It is obvious OST activities are used not only to help children develop certain skills, more importantly, it also reflects the parents’ intention to strategically foster in children certain qualities or virtues such as a sense of self-cultivation of proper conduct as a human being and competencies such as bilingual ability. These parents were also well aware that fostering the good personality traits and good habits can be only achieved through accumulation of small steps, as Rantel suggested, “after all, Rome was not built in one day.”

However, again, I need to reiterate what I have mentioned earlier that the pattern of OST activities arrangement for children by the Chinese immigrant parents in this study does not seem to completely match my respondents’ self-reported understanding of the competencies valued in

the current society they are living in (i.e., social ability, particularly independent life skills and people relationship skills, and leadership quality), which may be partially due to their unfamiliarity with the Canadian social systems, unawareness of certain resources and likely language barriers.

• Complementary to school education and extending school education to a broader life arena

Associated with these parents' comprehensive understanding of the concept of OST activities, another layer of function realized through children's participation in OST activities seem to have some connection with parents' perception of school education in Canada and their understanding of education in a broad sense. As I found out in my data, in terms of parents' perception of school education in Canada, several concerns emerge. First, some parents expressed their doubt at the actual effect of "learn through play" philosophy espoused in Canadian educational systems. At least four parents in this study mentioned they did not want to see their children idle time away just playing and therefore set up extra work or activities for children. Second, some parents believed certain important human qualities and competencies might not have been given sufficient stress in Canadian school education (e.g., moral traits like effortful learning mentioned by Eva; strong basic skills training mentioned by Selina, Eva, and Rantel). In view of the above, it is thus understandable for parents to resort to strategies such as out-of-school (OST) resources to take on a complementary role for their children's school education (e.g., playing musical instrument as a good way to foster self-discipline and moral self-constraint in children; to train children to be patient with delayed reward).

On the other hand, Chinese concept of education, in a broad sense, considers that learning can take place in all fields of life, which essentially is consistent with some interpretations of *ke wai huo dong* and Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO). Somehow, using OST activities as

opportunities for extending children's school education into broader life arena reflects the open-mindedness and farsightedness of some parents. For example, Cathy explicitly expressed that, "it is important to step outside your home, to see with your own eyes the world. It is also important to have a wide variety of interests, about which you can try different programs, programs based on interests." In addition, "it is better not to shut yourself up from the real world and build air castles in your room (Chinese idiom: *bi men zao che*). You need to be willing to go to the library, to read, to play with other kids at playground or else… You need to be open, so you will not act blindly" (Cathy). Other parents (e.g., Selina and Laura) have mentioned using OST activities to support children's mingling with people from diverse backgrounds, which give them a learning opportunities to appreciate diversity in the multicultural Canadian society as well as to value spirit of team work. Obviously, my respondents have realized that participation in OST activities as a way to extend children's school learning and to open their mind can help build on their independent learning capability which is more important than knowledge and skills themselves.

• Meeting pragmatic concerns and needs

The purpose of putting children in OST programs can be pragmatic, about which I have touched upon here and there in my previous discussion of my findings. For one thing, my respondents have made profound observations about the sophisticated functions of OST activities arrangement. In my data analysis, it was revealed that the function of OST activities can range from to prevent children from being negatively affected by certain people and certain things; to establish positive friendships; to meet certain future life considerations (e.g., the usefulness of learning Chinese); and to combat the pressure imposed by model minority stereotype (e.g., Wendong has expressed concern about admission policies in some Ivy League universities). In some cases, parents' personal needs may also come into play, for example, the purpose of

making children to perform some types of OST activities is to compensate what they had hoped to do but missed (e.g., in Eva's case).

• Allowing parents to exercise and impart their educational beliefs and important life values

When Selina and Ying commented on the importance of parent's role in cultivating children's competencies, "what I am thinking is that, we cannot just rely on the schools or the extracurricular activities. I believe parents play a bigger role," the implication is clear: after all, strategies such as OST activities or school activities are tools. The chance to optimize the use of these tools actually lies with the activator or operator such as parents. Somehow, this belief is actually borne out in these parents' self-reported childrearing strategies. For example, Rantel offered such an insight that, "she needs to know how to maintain a positive attitude when confronting adversities… If she possesses a healthy spirit and she can use a positive attitude to face any life adversities, I think that is also a kind of success" (Rantel). Similarly, Eva has brought up the comment on strengthening children's belief in overcoming difficulties by confronting them and practicing harder.

In a sense, allowing parents to exercise and impart their educational beliefs and important life values represents another important layer of functions of OST activities. To my attention, this function embodies the importance of the concept of training in Chinese parenting (Chao, 1994, 2000; Chen & Luster, 2002; Lin & Fu, 1990). Indeed, the concept of training finds its way in many examples. For several of my respondents (e.g., Eva, Rantel, Cathy Selina, and Wendong), children's participating in OST activities can help instil in them the important life values and philosophy such as practice makes perfect as well as no pains, no gains. In Laura's case, she stressed the cultivation of good habits through training children to practice piano every day. Besides, some of my respondents also expressed the need for extra work and subject-area

practice for the purpose of laying a solid basic foundation in children's education. Still another example shows training in daily life skills in order to build up the senses of responsibility in children (e.g., in Wendong's case).

About this function, I have assumed three interrelated reasons. First, it may be due to parents' limited involvement in their children's school education, which is likely the result of unfamiliarity with the educational systems in Canada and a feeling of losing parental control. Second, in a sense, strategies such as OST activities arrangement have therefore turned into an arena for these parents to exercise their locus of control and authority. Third, the perceived ineffective aspects of Canadian school education urged these parents to seek possible remedies.

• Creating a normal life for children

It is important to note that many of my respondents expressed their understanding of success and successful children in such a way that is way beyond just material pursuit and academic success. Particularly, some of my respondents stressed a happy and healthy life (physical as well as emotional), an independent career, the ability to make a living, and a person's internal satisfaction as the main goals in their childrearing blueprint. Such a mindset has greatly geared their childrearing practices toward creating an enjoyable, normal, and a fulfilled life experience for children in the current Canadian sociocultural context that differs from Chinese context in many ways, although individual variations can exist.

This function has been well exemplified through several attempts of Chinese immigrant parents in this study. First, environmentally adaptive moves were found to be taken, for example, to enrol children in various winter sport programs, and to guide children on a healthy track by enrolling them in OST activities to prevent children from being negatively affected by the outside world. Second, greater parental flexibility, reasonableness and toleration, if not leniency,

were seen to add a soft stroke to the traditionally strict Chinese way of parenting, for example, to allow children choices of reading varieties of books other than limiting them to academic subject-area study books only; to take initiatives and flexible attitudes in children's Chinese learning; to position role models at the level of real life examples who were living around other than someone that was up there as an ideal. Third, an attempt was detected in order to reverse the impression produced by the stereotypes of Asians and Asian students, for example, to enrol children in drama programs and music programs in order to help them build confidence, expressiveness, and outspokenness as opposed to shyness and withdrawal from interactions; and to let children open to contact with people of all sorts to encourage a spirit of team work and free communication.

In a word, on top of the need to foster skills, virtues, and life attitude, to enrich children's lives and create opportunities for extended learning, to enable children to be themselves (e.g., "I do not want to see her become anyone but herself" (Rantel)), to make a future of their own (e.g., "if they can make a living by themselves, they have certain financial foundation and they have their own career. I will say they are successful" (Yulian)), and to choose to live a life they want (e.g., "I just want to see her happy and know how to find happiness"(Rachael); "I expect him to pursue his passion and to be able to manage any consequences incurred from that pursuit, and keep going on this road until reaching that" (Eva)) are the main connotations of life these parents are investing in their children, which, based on my data regarding the impact of immigration and life experiences in Canada, are made to the best of their knowledge after they themselves have experienced a disruption of life.

This function, to great extent, represents an essential part of immigrants' settlement and adaptation task. As well, on the spectrum of locus of control, a movement is detected from

parents' end toward the children's end. From what my respondents revealed to me, I observed that they have taken on various roles such as nurturer, driver, encourager, assistant teacher, guard, play partner, cheerleader, role model, as well as life director in the lives of their children.

Premises and conditions for decisions on children's participation in OST activities

In the section above, I have made an attempt at exploring some of the influences that work behind parents' motivation and help them work toward a well-balanced decision. When I try to seek direct answers to the questions, such as whether there is a need to participate OST activities, why some children can take part in more activities than others, and why parents choose these programs over others, some premises and conditions borne out in the thoughts of my respondents seem to surface. To summarize, three-folds of premises and conditions should be considered: *parents' childrearing motivation, family and school conditions,* and *people and resources*.

In my interview with these Chinese immigrant parents, their motivation to put children in the OST programs was explicit. Five genres of evidence emerge. First, the perception of the positive influence a healthy friendship can bring to children most commonly motivated these parents to attend to certain OST activities. When commenting on how the construction design of communities in Calgary can limit people interaction, both Cathy and Rachael noticed the need for creating chances for children to make friends. Another example is shown when Selina expressed her concern about school policy regarding special needs students and her worry about her son making unhealthy friends in school. She overtly expressed her purpose of putting her son in OST programs for making healthy friends. In Eva's case, she noticed some limitations of certain school arrangements and residential living in children's making friendship. Second, as I have mentioned earlier, some pragmatic concerns might have created motivation in parents. Enrolling children in winter sports and Chinese learning can be covered by this genre. Third,

partly out of an acculturation need, there is a possibility that some Chinese immigrant parents are motivated to make their childrearing arrangements on the same page with Western parents. Take Eva's case for example. She mentioned several times that Western parents and Chinese parents from similar educational background would resort to similar childrearing practices, including the kind of OST programs chosen for children. Fourth, culturally recognized ideas in relation to learning and human conduct can be another reason for motivation. For example, parents expressed their hope to train certain competent qualities, such as effortful learning, perseverance, and expressiveness. Fifth, it is likely that out of a desire to compensate for family and children, some parents who used to prioritize their work over family were motivated to value chances to spend quality time with children (e.g., in Eva and Laura's cases).

In terms of family and school conditions, I detected mainly three genres of evidence. First, parents' highly educated background and their level of consciousness are supportive of the usefulness of participation in OST activities. This aligns with what I have explained earlier about parents' motivation. From another angle, the fact that none of the parents in this study was using tutoring programs may also support this point. Second, although family finance sometimes appeared to be a limiting factor (e.g., Eva reported not enrolling her child in skiing program due to the comparatively high cost of the sport), it is not as significant as I expected. These two pieces of evidence together might also offer an explanation as to why, regardless of economic and life challenges that most of the families encountered in the first years of their immigration settlement experience, parents still engaged their children in this or that kind of OST activities or programs, which were mostly concentrated in arts and sports, although most of the parents felt this was a very tiring task to take children to the lessons, and the cost for the activities was also one of the main factors to consider. Third, relatively light academic pressure in Canadian schools

seems to leave children space to enjoy OST time in activities. This point was confirmed by quite a few parents (e.g., Eva, Yulian, Selina, Tina, Wendong's wife) who either appreciate the educational practice in Canadian schools or do not want to see children idle time away just playing aimlessly.

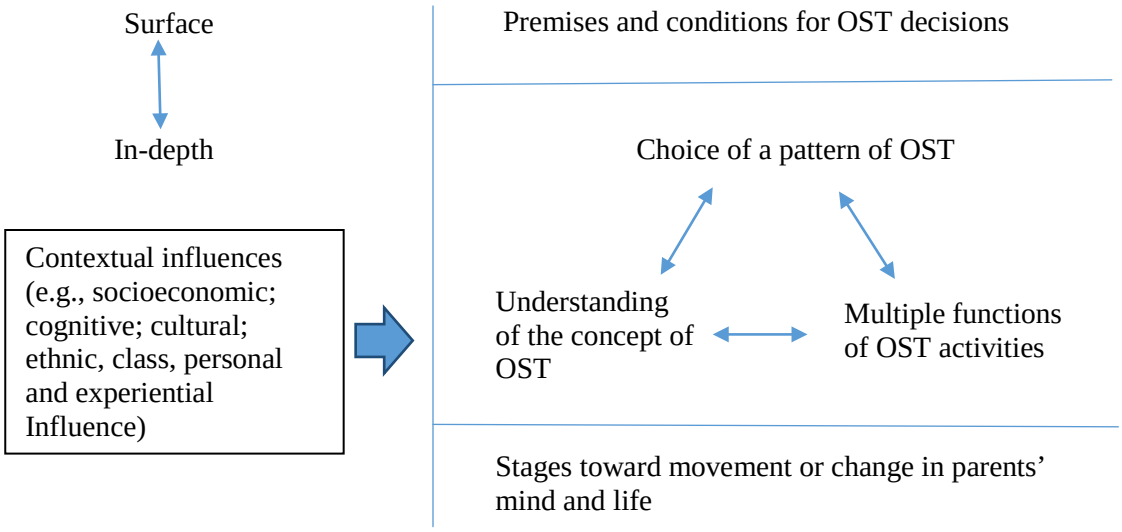
People and resources here refer to significant people (e.g., parents, teachers, and helpers such as grandparents, friends, and children and their siblings) as well as non-significant people (neighbours, other parents, people who can exchange information), tools (facilities, transportation and necessary funding or supplies) as well as availability and accessibility of OST programs that fit parents' needs. Understandably, parents' availability directly relates to the likelihood of children's participation in OST activities, which might be influenced by their perception of and attitude toward the usefulness of OST activities, their financial considerations, their work schedule, their house work load (e.g., drastic increase of house work was reported to have cast influence in many aspects of life), transportation (e.g., Wendong's child quit drama lessons due to transportation difficulties), available help from around (e.g., quite a few of my respondents reported how the help of grandparents relieved their life burden and therefore assisted parents in their childrearing arrangement), convenience of programs and influence of other significant people (e.g., the achievement of Laura's first child had greatly motivated her second child in her pursuit of music learning; information exchange among friends or acquaintances also proved to be a source of influence). The availability and accessibility of OST programs relates to parents' awareness of OST programs, the convenience of programs, the cost of programs and the quality of programs.

In a sense, the three-folds of premises and conditions relate to each other in their operation. They make the specific ongoing decisions with regard to children's OST arrangement

happen in such a way that parents' childrearing motivation prompts the need, favourable and supportive family and school conditions back up the need, and people and resources support and enact the actual operation.

In conclusion, this study has looked into the perceptive and experiential world of Chinese immigrant parents in the hope that we can gain a thorough understanding of how they think of and arrange their children's OST time. My findings have revealed an interactive dynamic of operations at different levels, which points to the methodological limitation of previous studies on family involvement in children's participation in OST activities. That is to say, how parents make what decisions with regard to their children's OST participation cannot be understood in an isolated way without looking at the sources of influences coming from broader and deeper ecological systems. For example, when we come to learn the factors that deter children from participation in certain OST activities, prior studies have suggested factors such as cost and transportation, parents' reluctance, their life or work schedule conflicts, availability of OST resources, and children's preferences. However, my findings indicate that past studies very likely only captured the issues that emerge on the surface level, but have overlooked what are working at an in-depth level (such as influences associated with shifts in parents' childrearing beliefs, their cultural mindsets, and ethnic and class differences), which can be more fundamental in shaping parents' decisions. Based on my respondents' descriptions about their background, their childhood experiences, their pre- and post-immigration life and work experiences, and their perception and practices in relation to children's OST activities arrangement, I have, from in-depth to surface, arranged my findings as depicted in the diagram below.

Figure 1 The interrelatedness of my findings



This diagram is used to reveal a general picture of the interrelatedness of my findings. As shown, at all times the contextual influences contribute to the changes at all levels of operations, determining that the status of all levels of activities is not static. This exactly resembles the changing world around us—shaping our mind and being shaped by us. The complicated stages that parents in my study have gone through are causing movement and shifts in their mind and life, and linking to the next level of operation by shedding light on their childrearing practice. As a result, OST associated understanding, patterns, and multi-functions that exemplify the influences on childrearing brought along by the in-depth level of activity, carry a connotation and form that can be fluid. Further, the joint work of understanding, chosen patterns and multi-functions seem to give rise to the required premises and conditions for OST participation on the surface, which then meet our eyes as what we can see as the causes for children's participation in OST activities. As also influenced by contextual conditions, the premises and conditions can fluctuate and then affect the operations at deeper levels.

To use one example here for illustration: some parents mentioned that they used to be raised in an environment in which parents strictly used academic performance as criteria (e.g., good marks in the examinations, and compliance to teachers' instructions and demands, etc.) to measure children's success. However, according to some of my respondents, this narrow definition of children's success was believed to have deprived children of their creativity as well as happiness in their personal pursuits. But this reflection came, at least partially, when immigration disrupted the life of these immigrants. The new context has availed to them different styles of Canadian living. As an adaptive activity in these parents, they compared, reflected, and evaluated and possibly moved to depart from their parents' way of raising children and attend to the overall development of their own children. These movements and shifts, as manifested in their attitude toward their children's education and life, led them to a different path of childrearing from their own childhood: namely, learning should be a fun experience; children should be allowed more freedom in exploring their personal pursuit; and children's academic excellence should not be stressed so much as to conceal the very importance of other competencies. With such a consciousness, these immigrant parents invested to shape their understanding and choice of OST and expectations (one of the multi-functions of OST as explained above) in a form that is accommodating of components from both the Canadian cultural context and the Chinese cultural context. As a result, on the level of premises and conditions, these parents appeared to be willing to create the necessary conditions and use certain OST resources to bring an enriched, enjoyable, and child-friendly life to their children.

Discussion and recommendations

The findings of this study revealed above have touched upon some of the questions raised in the prior studies. With regard to how to effectively involve immigrant families in children's OST

participation and how to make the availability of OST programs better match the demand of these families, in this section, I wish to address some of the opportunities that can possibly empower immigrant families as well as OST service providers.

Involving immigrant families in children's OST

In my literature review, I mentioned this recent trend in a focus on increasing after-school program participation (*program-centered*) toward a focus on parents' supporting children's learning and development in after-school settings (*learning-centered*) (Rosenberg, Harris & Wilkes, 2012), along with the fact that the topic of family engagement in OST programs has received extensive attention and discussion. Needless to say, parents' playing roles in children's growth is the central theme in the microsystem of parent-child proximal process (Ogbu, 1981). However, literature also suggests that although OST professionals often realize that family engagement is important and beneficial and they even have some strategies in place (e.g., in Little, 2012), many report that involving families is challenging. Based on my study, I want to provide some points in the hope that they can be helpful to relevant associated people (i.e., advocates, educators, parents, program designers, program planners) and agencies at all levels.

Learning about parents

To anticipate the participation of children in OST activities, we have to bear in mind that parents hold the key and they set the tone for their children's experiences during out-of-school time. So learning parents' needs, expectations, interests, and concerns is certainly necessary and should come first if we are to expect parental involvement in children's OST arrangement, which is usually considered an important part of a task of the analysis of supply and demand. Programs can work only if they attract children and are trusted by parents (Larner, Zippiroli, & Behrman, 1999). My findings suggest that if we want to understand parents better, our gaze should not just

focus on surface phenomenon but also the in-depth level of perceptive as well as experiential changes (e.g., movements and changes as I have suggested earlier). For example, even a quality program that has professional staff and appropriate place may not necessarily hit the expectations of parents (e.g., in the case of YWCA's programs that were considered basic and incomprehensive by some parents in the study). On one hand, it is necessary to have a heterogeneous mix of offerings that satisfy different group of people. On the other hand, it may be helpful to encourage parents' involvement if we can take into consideration questions such as these: *Which culture are parents originally from? What are the qualities and competencies that parents value and stress? What pragmatic goals do parents have in their mind? What OST activities have parents experienced in their childhood? How do parents understand OST in their original culture and in Canada? How do parents compare the OST arrangement in the two cultures? What roles do parents want to play in OST? What outcomes do parents expect to see? If funding is available, what other programs do they want their children to explore and experience?*

Connecting understanding and OST choices

My findings suggest that a big part of immigrant parents' understanding of OST activities may have come from their past experiences and prior knowledge in their original culture, which may, to a certain degree, diverge from what Canadians have in mind. As well, I found their choices with regard to children's OST activities do not seem to match fully the competencies these parents claimed to instil or cultivate in children. For example, to cultivate independent life skills, in my opinion, parents can use resources like Scout or 4-H clubs. But it is also interesting to note that when asked if they ever heard about youth organizations such as Youth Achievement Centre

whose focus is on fostering a business mind in children, Eva told me that several years ago she even once volunteered in that organization and offered some teaching of basic financial terms to youth. But interestingly, she never thought about sending her own children to that program. This confirms that there may exist uncertainties as well as a myriad of needs and expectations in parents' minds in seeking participation in OST programs. A strategic effort to connect parents' understanding with appropriate OST choices thus is needed. For example, an article by Wimer, Post and Little (2004) suggests that the first step in developing positive school-based after-school relations is to help the school-based after-school program establish a real presence in the building. Indeed, school-based after-school programs should be very familiar to Chinese immigrant parents ranging in ages from 30 to 45, as this is exactly what they used to know about OST activities in their childhood. And of course, this presence can be established in other settings as well, such as in the community, the church, or other places. Without a doubt, eliciting a feeling of familiarity in parents can be a good way to attract parents' attention and involvement.

Raising awareness

As my findings have suggested, the confusion and uncertainties of these Chinese immigrant parents could have originated from their unfamiliarity with many aspects of life in Canada, such as norms in their life and workplaces, the operation of Canadian school systems, and cultural differences in childrearing beliefs and practices. A stunning fact in my data is that most of the respondents even never heard about youth organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H clubs, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Cubs, Brownies, Scouts, and Girl Guides, etc., not to mention to even think about sending their children to those programs provided by these youth organizations. I have to admit that, if not for this research, I may be just as ignorant about these

youth organizations as those parents. Therefore, to increase their awareness of programs that match their various needs will certainly be helpful in addressing their confusion and uncertainties, and empowering parents to locate puzzle pieces as to find the best opportunities for their children. Further, I believe that some services already exist to accomplish this, such as guidance counsellors in some schools, and community consulting agencies. But in order to reach out to immigrant parents, more efforts are needed.

Marketing and design of OST programs

It should be noted that resources about OST programs are abundant nowadays. Without distinctive qualitative programs and without effective promotional strategies to newcomers, it can be expected that youth organizations may not be as competitive in this "market" as private organizers or municipal organizers. But still this also means these youth programs have a big space to expand if they want to share part of the market. According to Lauver and Little (2005), "finding the right hook" is undoubtedly essential to recruitment strategy.

Within the confinement of the scope of my study, I want to make a few points in relation to marketing and design of OST programs. First, based on the learnings about parents, marketing and design of programs should be able to meet their psychological (e.g., if the programs can build certain qualities in children; if the programs help well-rounded development; if the programs foster self-esteem), practical (e.g., convenience to access, affordability, and flexibility of schedules, etc.) and emotional concerns for children (e.g., whether parents feel comfortable, secure, or supported by sending children to certain programs). Equally, if not more important, the marketing and design of programs should also be able to meet parents' cultural and ethnicity-related needs, which seem to be missing in previous literature. About this point, I will use an example for illustration. As is widely known, deeply rooted in Chinese cultural values, effortful

learning and perseverance are desired qualities in a person of virtue. When previous literature suggested that children can attain greater gains if they participate in quality programs with greater frequency and in a more sustained manner, they probably do not make much effort to distinguish whether such a suggestion is the cause for children's participation or actually it happens as a natural outcome that comes with participation without parents' being even conscious of it. Second, I believe it is important to detect the shifts and changes that come into immigrants' lives due to contextual changes in the environment. For example, my study suggests parents' movement toward allowing children more freedom in their exploration and paying more attention to the quality life children should live. Sensitivity to the influence of such movements on parents' OST-related decisions should help in properly positioning the focus of the marketing and design of the programs. Third, as I suggested above, to elicit the feeling of familiarity with OST activities can be also an effective means for strategic marketing among potential parent groups. But again, this endeavour should be based on sound learning about parents' lived experiences. Fourth, from some parents' self-reported reasons, we can tell that their choices of certain OST activities to great extent reflect their consideration to compensate for the qualities suggested by Asian stereotypes. For example, the Chinese way of learning is usually viewed as having a lack of abstract, creative, and problem-solving elements. To compensate for this stereotypical shortcoming, some parents expressed the need for proper programs that can bring together the solid basic skills training and training for independent probing and creation. As another example, Chinese people are thought to be shy and withdrawn. To compensate for this stereotypical image, some parents encouraged children to participate in OST programs (e.g., drama lessons and music lessons that usually offer the chance for recitals) that can enhance their confidence, self-esteem, and language competencies. This should also be viewed as a focus in

the marketing and design of OST programs. Fifth, to be able to link children's present with children's future can certainly make OST more attractive to some parent groups. This point is indeed in line with what Lauver (2004) has suggested around feasible recruitment strategies such as offering opportunities for leadership, community services, and paid employment, etc. Sixth, as I have noted in my data collection, all of the parents in this study suggested that the educational systems in two cultures could *qu chang bu duan* (Chinese meaning to learn from each other's merits so as to mend one's shortcomings). This principle can also apply to the field of OST program design. For example, Canadian OST program providers can certainly learn from Chinese way of OST programming (Chinese: *ke wai huo dong*) and integrate useful as well as creative components into their own design.

That much said, however, the first thing that should be on the mind of program providers is an understanding that all the effort parents make direct to the ultimate goal of creating an enjoyable, fulfilled, and "normal life" for their children and preparing them for their future in the adult world. With proper foci and goals, intentions should be made known to targeted parent groups, Chinese parents in my case. There is a Chinese saying "*zhi ji zhi bi, bai zhan bu dai*" (which literally means to beat your enemy, you should first learn about them. Of course parents are not enemies, but they are to be won over to a program).

Creating conditions for the increase of demand

Studies of supply-and-demand are remarkably scarce (Larner et al., 1999). One of the critical reasons is that there is not clear and universal terminology to use in categorizing OST or after-school programs. This is probably one of the first things that all the involved agents need to deal with, and a good question to pursue in further research. In the following, inspired by the thoughts

of my respondents, I give my attention to the aspects of conditions that may be helpful in bringing the increase of demand.

Flexibility in school arrangement

Today's school running schedule is said to be a legacy from early farming days when children were released from school early in the afternoon and in summer to help parents with their farming business. Such a legacy certainly seems not adaptable to today's situations. But as we are still expecting innovative changes to happen, school-based extended-hours enrichment activity can be one of the remedial inputs for this not-very-flexible school arrangement. To Chinese immigrant parents in this study, the form of school-based OST programs are not something new to them because they very much resemble the management of Chinese schools as well as the supplementary Chinese language schools, though content can be diverse. This is the form of OST that many Chinese immigrant parents are quite familiar with, and more likely to send their children. This is in line with what Dryfoos (1996) has foreseen that schools in which quality education and comprehensive social services are offered under one roof have the potential to become neighbourhood hubs, where children and their families want to be.

Improving community environment

In my study, two of my respondents mentioned that the physical structure of community environments in Calgary in many ways limit the chances for people to interact and for children to make friends. This issue indeed poses challenge on community leadership and addresses potential opportunities to use creative and critical thinking for solutions. Obviously, attention should be given to how to build a family-friendly community environment in which children can thrive and parents can ease their mind from many concerns. Safe places for children to play

freely with one another are at least as important as good schools. This is also where appropriate OST programs can come in.

Necessity of consultation services

Grant (2012) in her piece, *Raising Expectations for Out-of-School Time*, raised the question: Who is helping them (parents) to make better decisions about out-of-school time activities? She made the note that parents often receive little communication about the program that their children are in and it is difficult for parents to get all things right in selecting a quality program in their first years of experience. In my study, the confusion and lack of awareness extracted from my respondents' self-reported stories again confirmed this phenomenon. While suggested in earlier literature, the idea of establishing intermediary organizations is not brand new (e.g., Kagan & Cohen, 1996). The functions of those intermediary organizations are to help parents to access local programs, offer training to providers, and gather planning data that give a bird's eye view of the programs in a given community (Larner et al., 1999). So without having to start from scratch, we probably can take a step to revisit that idea and make it a sound reality.

Funding availability

Although in this study family finance sometimes appeared not to be a significant factor in limiting children's participation in OST activities—parents still engaged their children in this or that kind of OST activities or programs regardless of economic and life challenges that most of the families encountered in the first years of their immigration settlement experience—it should not be treated as if family finance is not an issue at all. After all, we need also consider the mediating effect of other factors, such as parents' educational background and the values they hold. A thorough economic analysis of financing for OST programs should be conducted. Of course, to maximize the use of money and resources, broad partnership is needed among parents,

schools, community groups, churches, health services, OST organizations, social services organizations, and other agencies in order to effectively tackle the challenges posed by funding, staffing, space, facilities, and supporting institutions, and more. The most important thing is that we learn from best evidence, including the findings from this study, to begin the steps to improve OST programming, parent knowledge, and awareness of options for this important aspect in the lives of their children.

Questions that require future research

Although this study literally has a focus of its own, which is looking at what influences work behind parents' decisions with regard to their children's out-of-school time (OST) arrangement, it opens a window to a broader discourse among scholars committed to using ecological perspectives in family studies and educational studies. In the following, I want to suggest these questions for further study.

How effective parents from across educational backgrounds and ethnicities can strategically make use of OST activities in the development and future plan of their children? In this study, Chinese immigrant parents being interviewed were all highly educated. This allowed me to have generated rich and insightful data. Yet, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to groups of less educated parents and parents of other ethnic communities. A comparative study of parents across educational background and ethnicities can certainly generate more comprehensive data that can enable OST planners an overall and holistic view. Also, we may be able to learn better if ethnicity or other factors serve as the major factor in the differences in parents' decisions, since in this study, Chinese immigrant parents appeared to have drawn on their cultural notions and practices regarding childrearing and education in creating a largely distinct pattern of OST arrangement based on their cultural uniqueness.

What gap can we find if we take into consideration of children's voices and compare that with parents'? Although children's voices were intentionally not included in this study due to the focus on parents, their opinions and views are definitely worthy of studying, particularly when conflicting interests and values can be expected in those multicultural and multilingual families.

Do immigrant parents invest in the right places? What aspects of these immigrant children's accomplishments can be mostly attributed to their participation in OST? In my opinion, a longitudinal study of children of these Chinese immigrant parents should be valuable since it will allow us to learn in what way the OST activities these children have participated actually help their adaptation in the adult world and to learn what is missing in such a strategy.

Indeed, the above question also touches upon the pragmatic concerns of some of my respondents. For example, confused by the admission policies in some Ivy League universities, Wendong seemed to bring forward these questions: *Which comes first, the needs of children and families or the need to help brighten up children's school applications? What consequences may come after if we damp or sacrifice children's true interests in order to secure a future dictated by some social institutions?* To answer these questions, I believe we may have to rethink a basic philosophical question: *What is the mission of OST programs?* This question, indeed, has a root in the issue of social and educational inequality that should be given a thorough look, although methodologically this may not be easy.

What types of play or what components of certain types of play should be more helpful in enacting the philosophy of "Learn through Play"? What types of OST programs can better achieve "Learn through Play? What types of OST programs will be most effective in bringing out what qualities in children of which age range? Although learning can take the form of fun play and play can be educational, the interpretations brought up by the Chines immigrant parents

in this study seem to be a mix of doubt and support. As I see it, one of the reasons that parents in this study came to question the "learn through play" philosophy could be that they did not see the outcomes they actually expect to see. Since in my discussion and recommendations, I suggest the need to provide consultation services, these two questions may provide a good angle to start a conversation between the consultant and the parents.

A summary

As a commitment to scholarship in the OST field, this study bore the intent to look into the perceptive and experiential world of Chinese immigrant parents in order to gain a thorough understanding of how they think of and arrange their children's OST time. Guided by an ecological framework, I designed and undertook my research in such a way that allowed me a holistic view of what are working in shaping the mind of these parents in the context of their pre- and post-immigration experiences. Based on the rich and thoughtful data I sought through interviews with my respondents, this study revealed an interactive dynamic of operations at different levels.

Namely, my findings have suggested from in-depth to surface at least three interrelated levels of operations: the process of multiple stages that these parents have gone through resulted in the movements and shifts in their mind and life; the exemplified influence on childrearing from in-depth level through OST associated understanding, choice of patterns, and multi-functions of OST activities; and subsequently, the required premises and conditions for OST participation on the surface. An obvious gap was detected between these parents' understanding of competencies in the Canadian context and their choice of OST activities for children. Eventually, all the effort these immigrant parents made direct to the ultimate goal of creating an enjoyable, fulfilled, and "normal life" for their children and preparing them for their future in the

adult world, which is essentially a part of their adaptation task in the Canadian context. I suggest that how parents make what decisions with regard to their children's OST participation cannot be understood in an isolated way without looking at the sources of constant influences coming from broader and deeper ecological systems.

My afterthought

Numerous thoughts besieged me from the moment I decided to take the first step, throughout my interactions with my respondents, to the finish point of my writing.

So far, my memories about OST activities (or *ke wai huo dong* as we call them in China) in my childhood are not clear. This may be due to the fact that I grew up in the countryside of Northwest China. I seem to bear similar understandings of OST activities as some of my respondents (e.g., Laura and Selina), which is a type of broad and ambiguous way of defining OST activities. Actually, I do not remember if we had any structured OST activities. The kind of school organized *ke wai huo dong* included visit to the world famous tomb of the terracotta army in summer and in winter breaks. We visited that place so many times because it is close to where we live. Without much understanding about the greatness of this miracle, we felt almost fed up to go there again. Concerning school-based afterschool programs, I remember we irregularly had interest groups that gathered students with common interests or not (e.g., aero-model club, electronics club, choir, calligraphy club, Table tennis club, photography club). The use of the term "club" may not be very proper since no membership was required and only occasionally were teachers there to supervise. As a matter of fact, the most common afterschool activities for us were those unorganized and unstructured ones such as rubber band jumping, segmenting game in the muddy ground, climbing trees, climbing mountains, and playing in the sand beach along the riverbank. This is probably what Lareau (2011) has referred to as "natural accomplishment of

growth" most commonly found in working class families, although most of us playmates were from families with parents highly educated. Additionally, playing badminton in any available open space was one of my most favourite *ke wai huo dong* activities. Those who played badminton with me were relatively stable. We were familiar with each other and often exchanged ideas about techniques. It was only until I was in junior high school that my mom once asked me if I wanted to learn a musical instrument. I said no, because I had no idea about playing musical instruments and because out of all the students in the school only a few children took the private musical lessons, although there were times that I felt a bit jealous when I saw a child and her sister playing violin. But that was it. I didn't think about it for all these many years, until I myself had children after I immigrated to Canada.

Immigration, admittedly, represents one of the biggest transitions in my life. In many ways, I seem to have experienced most of the stages that my respondents have gone through in their lives. Confusion and uncertainties went side by side with daily life challenges. Clarifications were only gained through self-learning and constant comparisons. Such feelings reminded me of the similar process that I have experienced when I was very young—immigrating from countryside to the city. I have noted down reflections in my diary during the first years after my immigration to Canada:

> I see a changing me. One that has come from passive to active and one that has gradually come back to life. I remember I used to be quite sporty and passionate and take an interest to explore new things. And this personal journey has allowed me a chance to look at the different sides of me, which I thought not very much the real me. Anyway, I have added to my roles in life. And such experience may be helpful in giving new immigrants some insight into possibilities and choices. (Wenbei's diary, 2007)

> This complete new and strange place has definitely unfolded a picture for me, a picture that accompanies mixed feelings in me. In retrospect, all of what I have experienced, through life, work, and study are of a continuous and interconnected process, invaluable and helpful in adding up to enrich my personality and shaping my life goals. (Wenbei's diary, 2007)
>
> I felt a bit disappointed with some of the not so developed aspects of this developed country. When those cars passed by, with snow and water splashing out on me, my disappointment was even deepened. (Wenbei's diary, 2007)
>
> The road between my room and Education Building was once playing a very important role in my life for a long time, because it has made my life into a line with two ends. I believe I was tied to this line too much that I almost did not seem to see other alternatives and changes. Actually for a while I made this line the only form of my life until one day this road recalled me things other than just a line. There are stops along the road, for example, the swimming pool, the gym, the parking lot, the bushes and the bus stops. Now I have come to realize that this is when I neglected life that I felt I was neglected by life. (Wenbei's diary, 2007)

Such were the mixed feelings when I started a new life over here in Canada. Now I seem to feel quite relaxed to flip through my memories of those past days. I noticed the transition of miserable feelings to an active choice in me grows. Time really can heal and it is just a matter of time. Another interesting and invaluable lesson I learned was associated with my changing attitude toward "labour work." I remember the days I had to get up very early to go to my work in the university cafeteria in order to earn money to pay for my tuition. The fact that I had to start a life in Canada as a "labourer" was probably seen by my Chinese folks as a label of failure.

Now I really feel amused from this point of view. But I would bet that even today many people in China will not take this fact as something very common and popular. I have tried to explain to my parents that labourer work was actually not that bad. Many children over here in Canada start working such jobs at a relatively early age as a way to gradually gain their independence. And what is more, I learnt important life skills, for example, making good salads and sandwiches by myself. The contrast in values occurred to me. I came to realize that people in different traditions can carry with them divergent values toward one thing, which have been fostered in the context in which they live. These life experiences have had a big impact on my later childrearing experience as I learnt that fostering the independent spirit is most crucial for a standing human being.

Now I have to come to another biggest change in my life—a life with children. I have to admit that I was especially struck to realize the multicultural and pluralistic nature of Canadian society that adds multiple layers to the already complex nature of parenting and education of children. Just as what Babu (2006, p. 2) has suggested that preparation for children's schooling process at home and elsewhere can become burdensome, I intimately have confronted the helpless learning experience in order to overcome cultural barriers as well as negotiating cultural differences between various contexts. What I have internalized from my growing-up experience does not seem working with my children. Bit by bit and from time to time, what my children do, what they eat, and what they feel, expectedly and unexpectedly, reminded me of the differences between us. Naturally, confusion constantly rises when I have to face the educational systems in Canada.

Yet I believe I stick to my traditional values more than Western values. This is proved by the fact that I have been a loyal follower of the Chinese philosophy that *a successful journey*

starts from the first right step (qian li zhi xing shi yu zu xia). Although it is almost challenging to expect children to carry on parents' cultural heritage, I have made every effort to instill in my children some of the values that I myself have been carrying in me since my childhood (e.g., one needs to form good habit early in life; laying a solid foundation is crucial for future success; perseverance, self-discipline, effortful learning, courage, and humility are the qualities in a person of good virtue). These values reflected my understanding of the important competencies to be cultivated in children in order to enable them a fulfilled life in the future adult world.

As a result, I have resorted to the strategic use of OST activities when my children reached five years old in spite of the tight family financial situation at the time. I have enrolled them in the OST programs, which, without exception, fit in the pattern common to Chinese immigrant families in this study: playing a musical instrument, participating in sport activities, and learning Chinese.

My motivation of placing them in a music program seemed to come to me in a natural way. I was living in a community crammed with young families with many similarities: most of the families were immigrant families; both parents, or at least one parent were highly educated; and all the families had small children. At the community playground, parents can get all kinds of information through random conversations with each other. Commonly talked-about topics included children, schools, religion, personal interests, life concerns, and food. I intentionally paid attention to stories shared about how children were doing in schools, how parents were feeling headache about maintaining their mother language at home, and how parents tried to put children in different programs which they could afford. It was at this parents' circle that I learnt there was a Suzuki music program for babies free to families in the community. I searched about the Suzuki music program online and made up my mind to send my child there to learn violin,

although some of my friends mentioned learning violin could have this or that difficulties for small children. Learning violin was new to me and my children. But deep in my consciousness, I deemed it as something that an intellectual should pursue. The process of learning violin is also the process of instilling in my children some of the important life lessons. This is definitely the culturally bound influence that I have explained in my findings. Although I still have to remind them of practicing every day, I see their pleasure of playing with confidence grow in them gradually.

One additional value of learning violin is that we have developed a close relationship with the violin teacher despite of the fact that the fee for learning violin is quite expensive to us immigrant families. Each visit to the teacher's house has become a learning experience for me as well (e.g., learning how to parent children and learning English). In addition, communication with the teacher has also opened a window for me to learn about the cultural norms in Canadian context.

About learning Chinese, without a doubt, I, as a parent growing up in China, would choose for my children despite of the fact that learning Chinese can be more difficult than learning English for my two Canada-born children. From time to time, I came to realize that without sufficient cultural knowledge, learning a language can be very unmotivating. This is indeed a challenge in teaching my children Chinese. Often, they sound out the Chinese poems with no idea what they are talking about. The gap in communication inevitably exists. Although I still insist that learning Chinese is important, for carrying over my ancestry's culture and for children's future, I turned to a less strict attitude in demanding their grasp of the Chinese language. I continue to send them to Chinese school and have tried to expose them to whatever proportion of Chinese cultural learning. As long as they can read some, write some and are able

to carry out daily conversations with their grandma, I choose to give them some understanding and not to push too hard. Such of my attitude of lowering my expectations of children's learning Chinese should attribute to the movements and shifts occurred to my mind as I have gone through many stages in my life after immigration.

I, like some other parents, also benefit from sending my children to Chinese school. This is a good chance for parents to socialize, to expand personal networks, to get emotional support, and to exchange information about resources. For me, I have used this time to discuss parenting concerns and to gather childrearing advice. Although I did not make use of the enrichment programs that the Chinese school offers due to time schedule and cost factor, I personally endorse such school-based OST practice.

The motivation of sending children to sport programs such as skating, swimming and soccer derived originally from my thoughts that they should try what real Canadians do and that sports can bring healthy and happy times for them. Once again, my motivation reinforced some of my respondents' intention that they should be on the same page with those Canadian parents. But whether my choices of OST programs are perfectly helpful in carrying out their mission of bringing well-rounded human beings and competent and responsible citizens seem to need further consideration.

As a final contemplation on the meaningful value of this study, I have three last points to make. First, the findings of this research helped me address the gap in our understanding about parents' choices around their children's OST activities. It also provided meaningful data for OST providers at various levels (e.g., community as well at government levels) in their decision making. Although OST professionals seem to already have possessed this mindset of switching from increasing participation from program-centered orientation to learning-centered orientation,

which focuses on building up capacity of parents in supporting their children's learning and development, this switch in thinking seems largely to still remain at theoretical level. What I have read in the literature, even including the most recent research, seem to suggest that, in the actual practice, the focus on program does not make much change, and learnings about parents and immigrant parents are limited and less adequately studied. We might have achieved some understandings about parental involvement on the surface, but the fundamental part underneath still need further exploration.

Second, the findings from this study provide important empirical data in supporting some of the essential notions conveyed in the ecological models that I used for the undertaking of this study. At the same time, this provides a chance to input and extend the application of some aspects of the models. For one example, Ogbu's cultural ecological model begins with the analysis of the effective environment. The effective environment refers to the knowledge and level of technology a certain population possesses and utilizes in their resources exploitation. According to Ogbu (1981), this effective environment largely shapes a population's subsistence strategies, which constitute the main cultural tasks required by the society the population are living in, and eventually influence the social organization of and techniques of childrearing. As my study has demonstrated a process of multiple stages these immigrant parents have gone through, I assume this multiple-stage learning process can occur before they actually obtain an effective environment. Reasonably, this may cause a chain of reactions in the factors in the model. For immigrant families in this study and in general, this may be a necessary step to take—to construct and obtain knowledge of and to understand the nature of their environment in order to arrive at an effective environment that they can eventually use for effective adaptation and thereafter effective childrearing.

Third, in a significant way, this study has exemplified how we can gain deeper understanding by focusing on and differentiating a group of people from a general cultural category of groups of people. Actually, some scholars already pointed out the pitfalls of studying groups of people from a general cultural background as a whole (e.g., Falicov, 1995). For one thing, some conclusions thus reached could be too general to be applied to any subgroups of a culture. So my study actually has provided an example of focusing on one group out of many groups coming from a general cultural category. This is a way to avoid stereotypical conclusions, and likely, a tendency to oversystematize. All of these aspects have made my research especially meaningful.

In the end, let me conclude my dissertation with this Biblical proverb: “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs, 22:6).

APPENDIX INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Interview Questions for the First Interview

Demographic Information/ecological context

1. Can you tell me something about yourself?

   e.g., your age, religion, personal interests or hobbies…
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Can you tell me something about your family in which you grew up, in terms of parenting, finance, social status and whatever you think might have had an impact in your own life during childhood?
4. How do you describe the community that you and your family lived in and are living in, in terms of relationships, facilities, or whatever else you can think of?
5. Can you describe bit about the school you went to in your childhood years?
6. Can you tell me something about your life now?

   For example, your school, your work, your family life, your community…
7. Do you have any relatives or friends here?

Child-rearing

1. Can you tell me something about your children?

   E.g., their age, school, interests…
2. What do you expect your child to become through education or whatever effective means (e.g., the use of OST programs) of inculcating values and cultivating their potentials?
3. Can you give me an example of what you believe to be a successful child in your original society, and in Canadian society?

4. What do you think are the important competencies children should be achieving in this society and in that society you used to connect with?
5. What do you feel are the best ways to achieve the tasks required of children by society, community, and the family?
6. Are your familiar with the opportunities and resources around you in terms of assisting you in childrearing? Can you give me some examples?
7. What do you expect your children to learn and be?
8. What are the changes of your expectation on children before and after immigration?
9. In what respect do you think the cultures should communicate or learn from each other so as to make childrearing not too confusing?

Interview Questions for the Second Interview

Immigration and acculturation

1. Can you compare the life in your current community and the community where you used to live in your home country?
2. Through what ways have you learned the differences or similarities of the two cultures? Can you give me some examples?
3. How do you feel about the impact of immigration in your life?
   Can you give me some examples?
4. How do you like the changes in your life?
5. How did the changes in your life and your adaptation impact your children?
6. Have you and your children adapted well in the new environment?
   Can you give me some examples?
7. What changes did you expect to see in your children's life and education?

Competence and strategies

1. What OST activities you have experienced in your childhood?
2. What are the competencies you consider as essential for success of children in your culture of origin?
3. What are the competencies you consider as essential for success of children in Canadian culture?
4. What do you know about the ways these two cultures cultivate essential competencies in children through school systems and out of school endeavors?
5. What might be some impacts of these differences in ways of cultivating competencies?
6. What are the resources of OST programs currently available to you?
7. How do you learn about the useful resources of OST programs?
8. What OST programs do you feel are more important than others, and why?
9. What OST programs your children were and are taking?
10. Did you see any benefit from participating in those OST activities?
11. Who and what around you may influence your decisions concerning enrolling your children in OST programs or not?
12. Do you have a successful child model in your mind that guides your childrearing practice?
13. To what extent did the people you used to connect with in your culture of origin place importance on out-of-school means for cultivating essential competencies in children? In what ways?

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